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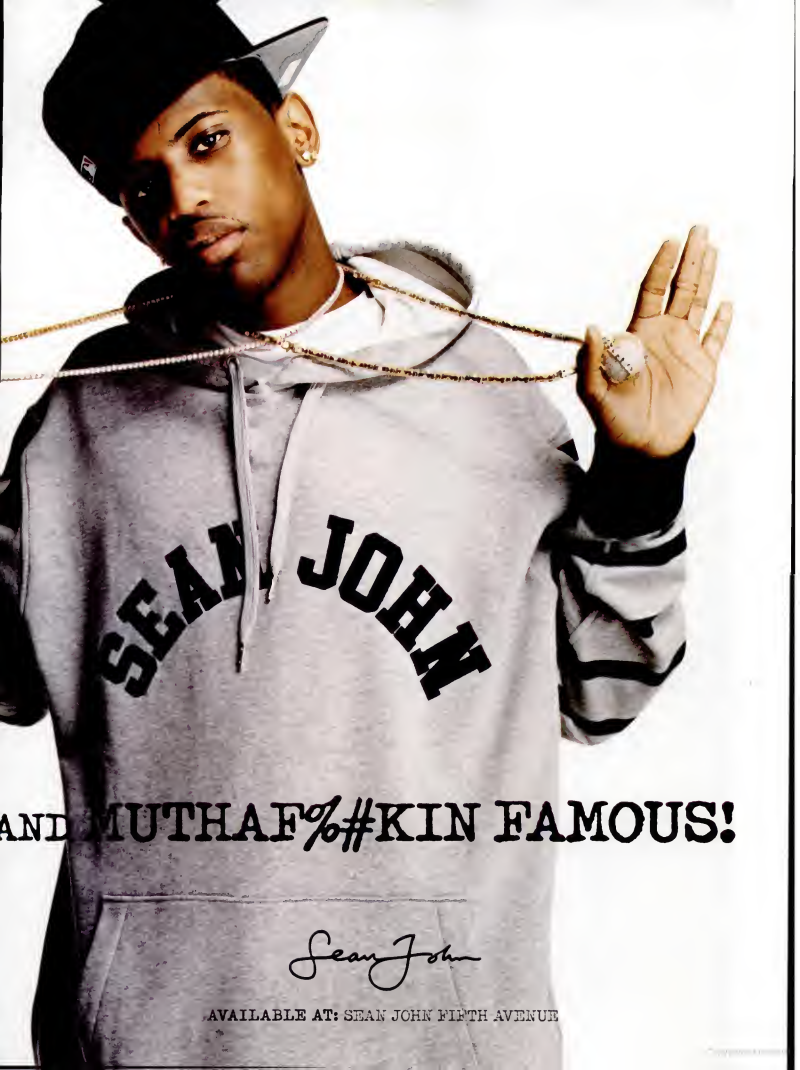
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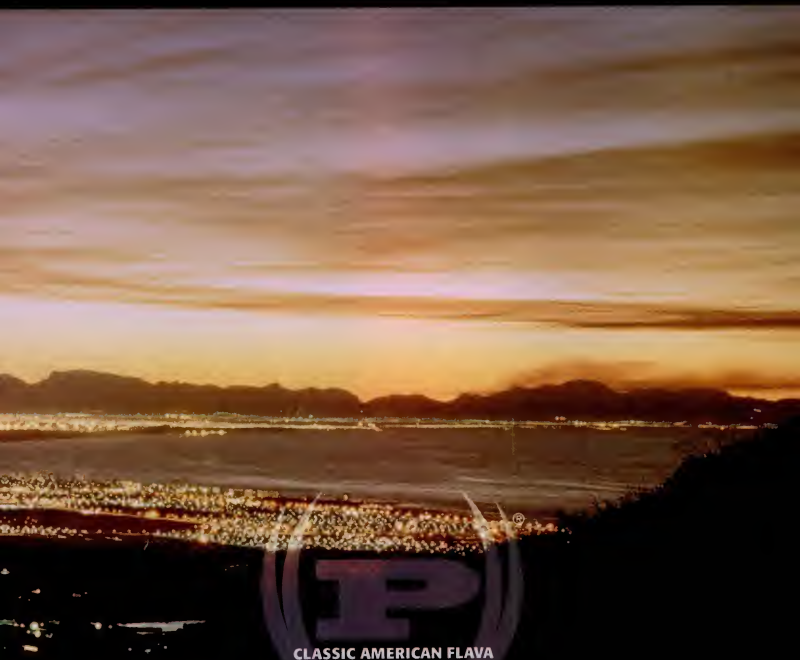




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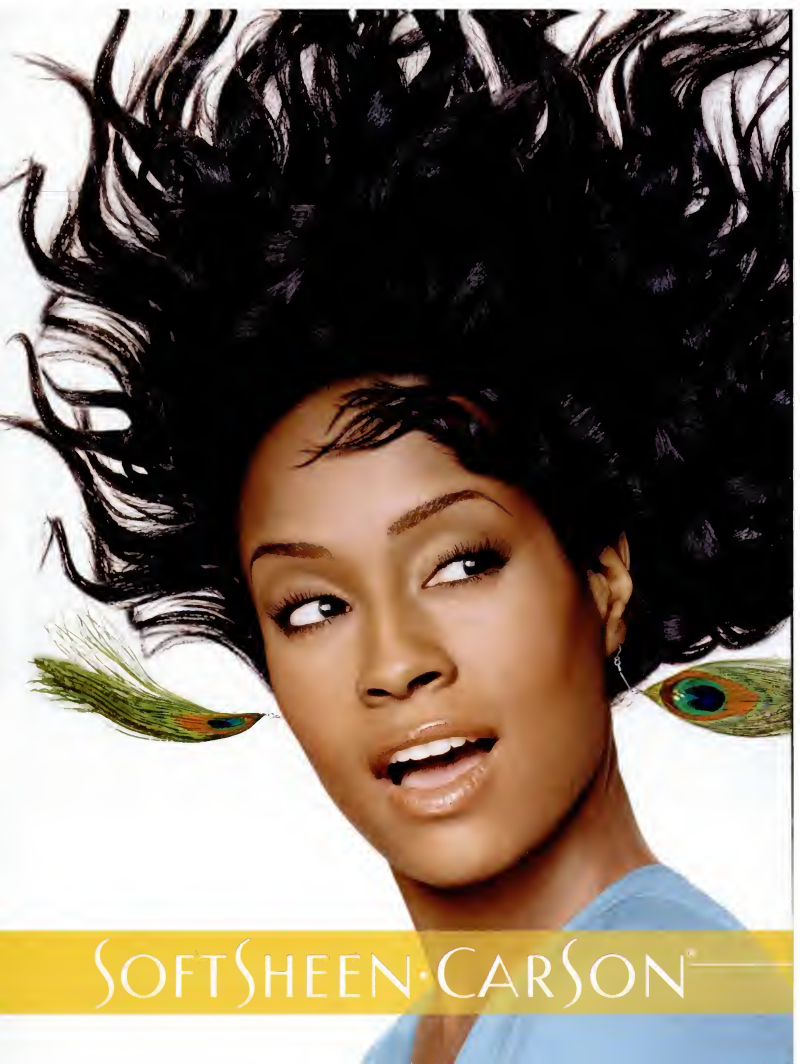
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Jay-Z or 50 Cent? Destiny's Child or the Diplomats? Anguilla or Atlanta? Let the arguments begin as VIBE ranks the **HOTTEST PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS** for our 12th Anniversary Juice 100 list. And you'll never guess who's number one. What are you waiting for? Plus: Hip hop blogs, sneaker boutiques, top music execs, and so much more!

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198 // Rude Awakening
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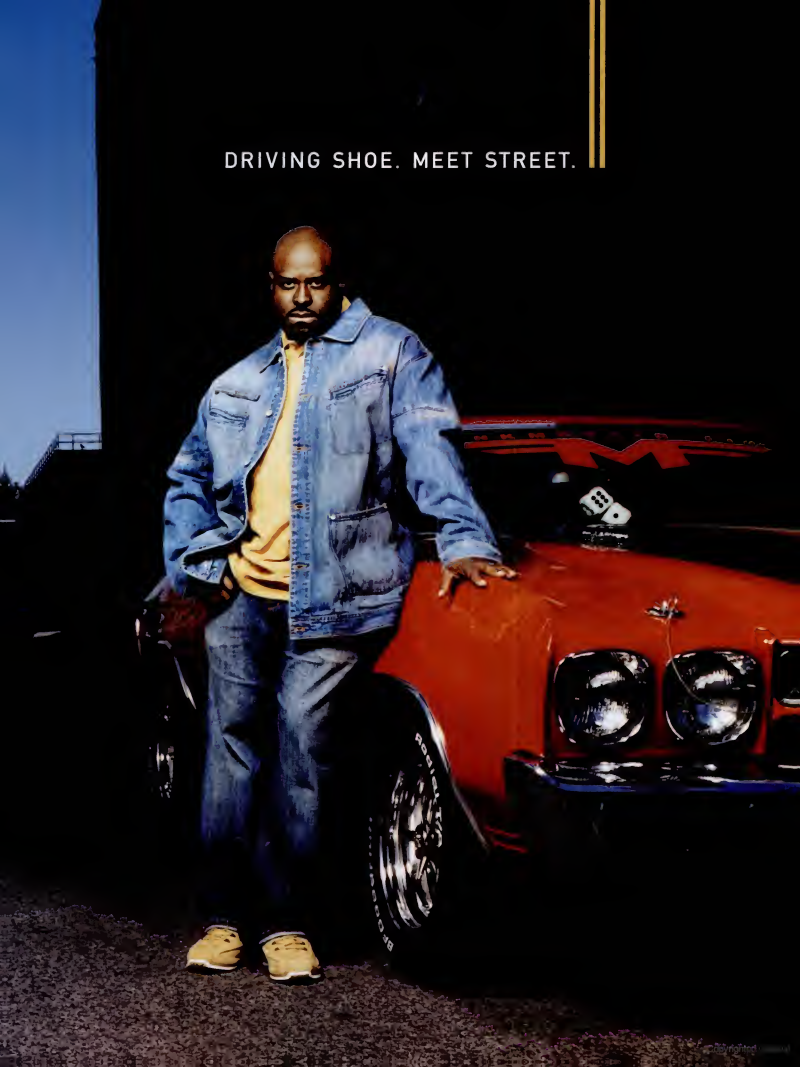
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> Jamie Foxx
On the cover and this page: ("Gassed Up," page 184) photographed exclusively for VIBE by **GUZMAN FOR CREATIVE EXCHANGE AGENCY.** Styled by Liz Cowan for Creative Exchange Agency. **On the cover:** Blazer and tank by Dolce & Gabbana; jeans by Prps; leather and silver necklace by Nagual.


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212 // Barrio Boogie

PITBULL and **NINA SKY** recreate the chic, sexy, salsa vibe of '70s **SPANISH HARLEM.** PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN WATTS. STYLING BY JOHN MOORE

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> Keyshia Cole
("The Juice 100," page 151), photographed exclusively for VIBE by **ANTOINE VERGLAS.** Styled by John Moore. Studded dress by Roberto Cavalli; necklace with heart pendant by Agatha Paris.



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> Fashion

("Barrio Boogie," page 212), photographed exclusively for VIBE by **BEN WATTS.** Styled by John Moore. (From left) Organza, lace, and velvet dress by Paco Rabanne by Patrick Robinson; patent leather heels by Versace; gold bangles by Lee Angel. Pinstriped suit by Polo by Ralph Lauren; striped shirt and shoes, all by Versace Collection; sunglasses by Marc Jacobs. Lace dress by Veronique Leroy; earrings by Baby Phat; bangles by Lee Angel; sandals by Michael Kors.


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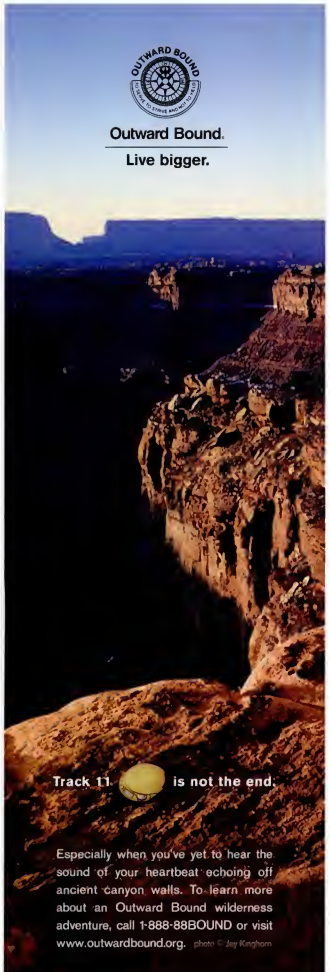
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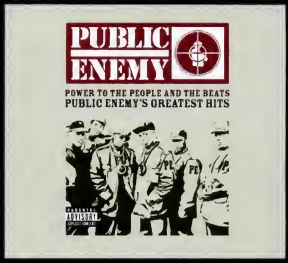
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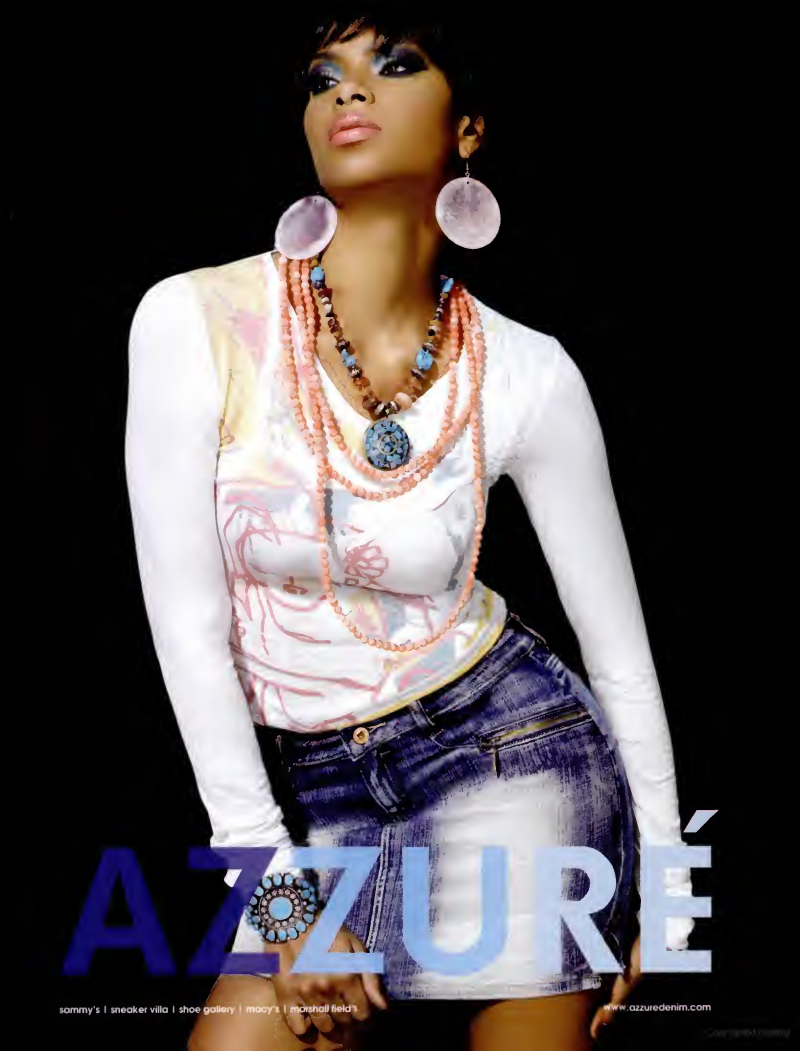


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SLICK MOVES: (Clockwise from above) Photographers Guzman (aka Connie Hansen and Russell Peacock) with L.A. photo assistant Alex Almeida (left) set up at Foxx's Tarzana, Calif., home; Sony BMG rep Chris Chambers eases in with stylist Liz Cowan; author Cheo Hodari Coker goes shoulder to shoulder with his subject; Foxx looks for the open man.

FOXX HUNTING

Among journalists, it's kind of a running joke that once artists have any kind of success, they transform into jerks. The sweet, shy singer turns into a monster diva. The hungry rapper who was thankful just to be interviewed, now only does cover stories. The list goes on and on. It's the reason why we're always surprised when someone stays normal.

The first time I met Jamie Foxx was in February '03. The Neptunes were throwing a party in L.A. two days before the Grammys. When I pulled up to the club, I was surprised to see a three-level tour bus in the parking lot next door. It even had a bouncer at its entrance, selectively letting people in. Turns out it was Foxx having his own private affair. His reasoning was that he couldn't deal with dudes in clubs showing hate, bringing trouble his way. Instead, he'd rather control a party where the dynamics work in his favor. And clearly, this was a much better environment for him. The guys felt honored for the invitation, so no more looking at him all jealous. The same hot girls in the club would make their way over, eager to party with Foxx and friends. As he moved around the bus, he asked guests if they were all right, if they needed anything. Drinking out of a red plastic cup, Foxx was the picture-perfect image of a down-to-earth celebrity. One who doesn't take himself too seriously, even as he enjoys the perks of his fame.

Fast forward to the post-Oscar win, sitting poolside at Miami's Delano hotel in May '05. As we discussed his new album, I saw no indication of a drastic change in his personality. In fact, he was as humble as ever, insisting he would be appreciative of any press in VIBE about his music, regardless if it wasn't a cover. Interestingly, he also didn't demand a cover the year before (which is usually the case with Hollywood types) when we did a feature about him. Even now with his victorious night at the Academy Awards, Foxx didn't see any reason to switch up. And that, along with his talent and good heart, is why we admire him.

This year's anniversary issue is especially exciting for us. For the first time ever, we've decided to rank our infamous Juice list of the 100 hottest people, places, and things. Frankly, we were getting a little bored with it and wanted to spice things up. Led by Features Editor Serena Kim, this was a particularly difficult task, one she managed excellently with little bloodshed among the staff. We're passionate about what we do here, and although we fought like crazy, we're proud of the results. We'd love to hear from our readers to let us know your thoughts on the new format. Especially if you disagree with the rankings!

Elsewhere in the issue, we spotlight Barack Obama, the man who may become America's first black president ("The Chosen One," by Jamie Katz, page 206). There's new artist Young Jeezy, the breakout star of Atlanta's Boyz N Da Hood ("Cold as Ice," by David Peisner, page 194). And one of America's favorite reality couples, Bobby and Whitney ("Rude Awakening," by Rob Kenner, page 198).

We heard about Luther Vandross's passing just as we went to press, and were deeply saddened by the news. Check out next month's issue for a worthy tribute chronicling the singer's legendary career.

MIMI VALDÉS
Editor-in-Chief

P.S. If you've got comments about this issue or suggestions for stories you'd like to read, I wanna hear from you! Hit me back at *mimi@vibe.com.*"

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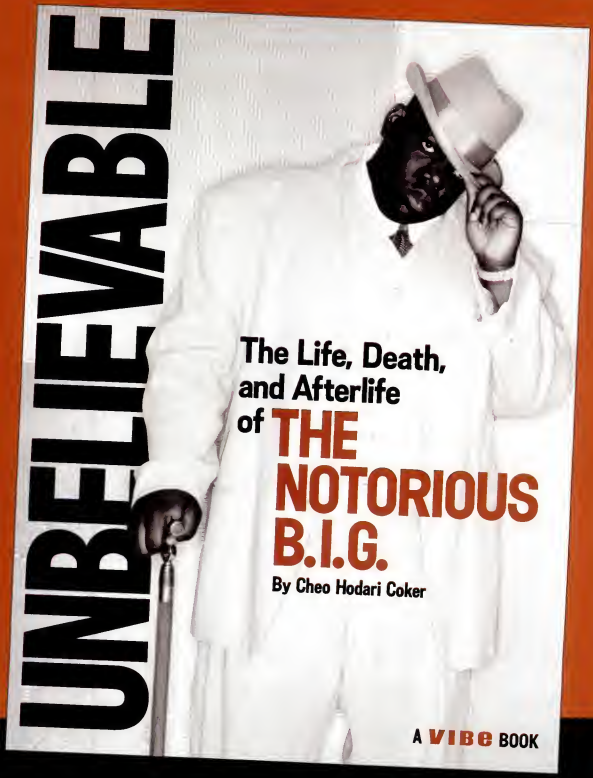
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THE GUEST LIST

> GUZMAN
This month: The husband-and-wife photo team captures Jamie Foxx at his home for our cover story ("Gassed Up," page 184)
Born in: N.Y.C. and Harlow, England
Age: 630 combined--in dog years
Side hustle: *foto pozytyw*, *Blender*, and *British GQ*
Best Jamie Foxx movie: "Raylateral"
Favorite husband/wife duo: SpongeBob SquarePants and Patrick Star





> BEN WATTS
This month: Shoots our retro fashion spread in Spanish Harlem ("Barrio Boogie," page 212)
Hometown: London
Age: 38
Side hustle: *Vanity Fair*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Elle*
Worst indulgence: Inappropriate humor
Favorite fashion faux pas: "A few of my mates have said my shirts look like tablecloths."



> OLIVER WANG
This month: Eulogizes a legendary hip hop figure: the crate carrier (Start, "Crate Expectations," page 87)
Lives in: San Francisco
Age: 33
Side hustle: NPR, *Wax Poetics*, stay-at-home dad
Vinyl vs. CDs: "Wax--it's tactile in a way that CDs will never be."
Favorite record shop: Groove Merchant in S.F.

> MAURICE G. GARLAND
This month: Profiles up-and-coming MC Noah (Next, "God's Son," page 148)
Based in: Decatur, Ga.
Age: 25
Side hustle: *Rolling Out*; *UrbanStyle Weekly*, *Ozone Magazine*, *XXL*
Inside scoop: "Noah has the smarts, charisma, and personality to become the next Tupac, without trying to be the next Tupac."



> ALVIN BLANCO
This month: Travels to Cleveland to interview rising star Ray Cash (Next, "Ohio Player," page 146)
Represents: The Bronx
Age: 28
Side hustle: *XXL*, *The Ave*, *Scratch*
Favorite era in hip hop: '93 'til infinity
Best DJ/rapper duo: "The DJ's name is Premier, and I'm the Guru."





in-house counsel

> For Editor-in-Chief MIMI VALDÉS, job one is maintaining VIBE's competitive edge. "We strive to bring readers information they haven't read before," says the Puerto-Cubana New Yorker, who joined the staff as an editorial assistant in 1993. On the rare days Valdés, 34, isn't working, she enjoys kicking it with her boyfriend, Kaseem.



EUNJEAN SONG - MARIAN BARRAGAN

(From left) Mimi Valdés, Shani Saxon-Parrish, Lori Yacovone, Erik Parker, Angie Romero, Rondell Conway, Jamie Katz, Serena Kim, Noah Callahan-Bever, Benjamin Meadows-Ingram, Toshitaka Kondo, Jayson Rodriguez, Jazmin Perez, Patricia Carter, Abena Agyeman-Fisher, Laura Checkoway, Lacey S. Banis, Liane Radel, Wyatt Mitchell, Marian Isel Barragan, Marcus B. Ward, Neomi Assabanha-Rapoport, EunJean Song, Florian Bachleda, Alice Alves, Jef Castro, Rajni Lucienne Jacques, Lekeia Varlack, Lynne d Johnson, Tanisha Blakely, Lakeba Hollar, and Rob Kenner.



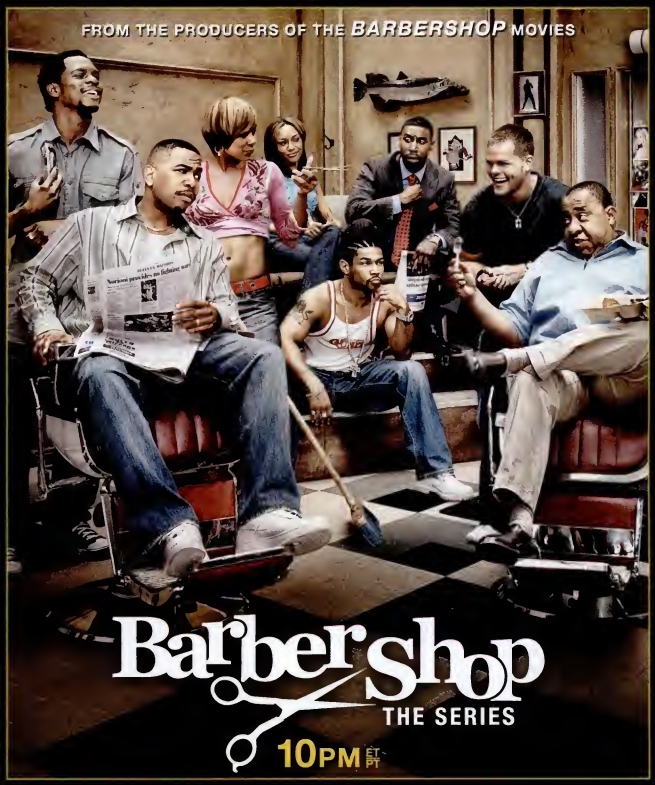
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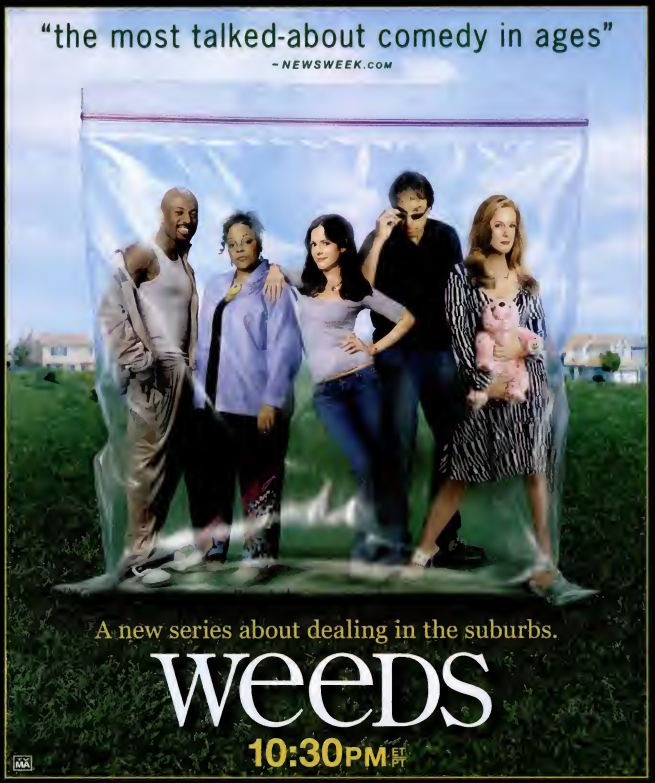


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–Laura Checkoway, Research Director

JOHN COLTRANE, "Olé" (Atlantic):
"Takes the pain away."
–Florian Bachleda, Design Director



< SHAKIRA, FEAT. ALEJANDRO SANZ, "La Tortura" (Epic):
"One day I will shake it like Shaki."
–Angie Romero, Editorial Assistant

JAMES BROWN, "Funky President (People It's Bad)" (PolyGram):
"Sure beats W."
–Andrew Simon, Deputy Managing Editor



< MARQUES HOUSTON, *Naked* (Universal):
"Getting naked like D'Angelo was a good look."
–Lynne d Johnson, General Manager, VIBE Online

SUZANNE VEGA, "Caramel" (A&M):
"It's all about forbidden love."
–Lori Yacovone, Managing Editor



< COMMON, *Be* (Geffen):
"He's obviously still in love with h.e.r."
–Shani Saxon-Parrish, Executive Editor

BEANIE SIGEL, *The B.Coming* (Roc-A-Fella):
"That Philly cat is back at it."
–Jayson Rodriguez, Editorial Assistant



< MARIAH CAREY, "We Belong Together" (Island):
"She channels the legends beautifully."
–Serena Kim, Features Editor

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FOOTWEAR, CLOTHING AND ACCESSORIES



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Was It G.O.O.D. for You?

Who has the hottest covers ever? VIBE. Which was VIBE's hottest? Yes ma'am, it was and is the July 2005 cover with Kanye West, Common, and John Legend. They are looking real, "Good day, good sir." The grooming is so new and fresh. Common represents the revolutionist, Kanye represents the business chic, and Legend represents the mischievous. It is simple in a real, freak-out complex way. The white against the brown background is just right. I bet they smell good. If I had a candy bar, I would put this picture on the front with the phrase, "Get it while it's fresh."

Richelle Brown, Atlanta, Ga.

Since VIBE's last feature on Kanye, I wasn't at all enthused about him and questioned his maturity and egocentric attitude. However, after reading "The Last Laugh" [by Noah Callahan-Bever, July 2005], and especially after hearing Common's album, *Be*, I have to give it to Kanye: The man has grown. I respect that. As long as he keeps his head on straight and makes classic hip hop like this, he may earn a new fan who used to be a hater.

Stanford Florence
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Kanye West is the most self-absorbed artist on the planet. Sure he's talented, but his comments show that he's just another ignorant-ass rapper. *The College Dropout* was great, but it was no *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*.

JB
Chicago, Ill.

What kind of a cover story was that?! Noah Callahan-Bever hated on Kanye West and Common so badly it turned into an editorial. The next time Mr. Callahan-Bever decides to write, specify that this is strictly his opinion *only*!

Shavon Blakes
New Orleans, La.

Callahan-Bever's article gave me a clearer picture of Kanye West. He was already a little on the arrogant side, but since the *The College Dropout*, Kanye is just putting too much on it! You can't even compliment him without him jumping in and beating you to the praise. Kanye, stop tooting your own horn before it becomes a sour note, buddy.

Mo Lines
Cleveland, Ohio

I was so excited to see John Legend on your cover. He's a talented artist who provides a breath of fresh air to the industry. Sadly, I was very disappointed to see so little information about him in the story. What was the point of featuring him on the cover? I hope sometime in the near future VIBE will do a full feature article on Legend. I'll be waiting.

Daphne Dumornay
Philadelphia, Pa.

That was messed up how you got me for my dollars on the July issue. Why would you put John Legend on the cover with Kanye and Common and barely even mention Legend inside? I mean, there were only four substantive articles in the whole magazine, why not give the readers what they thought they were buying—an article about three (not two) of today's hottest artists.

Allen Glover
Rockville Centre, N.Y.

Editor's Note: You both must have missed our big feature story on John Legend in the April '05 issue. We couldn't repeat his story! That's why we focused on newer info about this crew—albums by Kanye West and Common.

After reading the recent article on Common, Kanye, and J. Legend, I was disappointed in VIBE magazine once again. Clearly, the respect, accolades, and well-deserved pat on the back that each artist deserves does not come through in this article. Each of these individuals is a genius. Plainly put, who gives two craps about whether the interviewer thought Common and Kanye were having a genuine conversation? What does this have to do with their creativity, lyrics, or artistic skills? But then again, why should I ask this question from the same magazine that gives N.O.R.E. a whole article on how a girl looks in a pair of jeans ["In Those Jeans," Start, July 2005]. VIBE, give me a break.

J.T.
Puterson, N.J.

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Quit Monkeying Around

Why does hip hop love to hate the Black Eyed Peas ["Paper Thin," Imani A. Dawson, July 2005]? I'll tell you why: This loser of a community (i.e., the hip hop community) is so ignorant. The Black Eyed Peas don't get caught up in all that fake, urban, grab-your-dicks hip hop shit. They make different stuff, good music you can appreciate. BEP, do your thing and fuck these haters.

Eddie
Philadelphia, Pa.

SAY WORD

Send us your best poetry or lyrics in **90 words or less** on the next topic of **"good vs. evil"** to **sayword@vibe.com**, and you may see it here. Please include your name, the subject, and a contact number. Check out this **"competition"** poem by Nelea A. Johnson of Capitol Heights, Md.



I run my fingers through my hair /
Wonder if I would be compared /
To the video vixens seen on TV / See me /
Running the race /
Of the best body and prettiest face /
What are the rules to this game /
Being viewed by many as an average dame /
What do I win / if I was seen as the best /
Or would I be passed over like the rest /
'Cause of my small behind and petite chest /
Who makes the decisions /
In this superficial world of competition?

One More Thing

In your "10 Things I've Learned" article by T.I. [Start, July 2005], it's obvious that he hasn't learned that the frequent use of the N-word isn't cool. How distressing is it that one of our fellow African-Americans can't even conduct an article for a magazine without perpetuating such a stereotype? VIBE, I know you can't ignore amendment rights, but articles like that seriously make me consider whether I'm investing my money in the right magazine.

Malorie Marshall
Orlando, Fla.

Mama Don't Preach

I never usually do this, but I just had to comment on the letter from Big Pun's mom [Mail, July 2005]. I can understand where it may become tiresome listening to what seems to be the same story over and over again, but does Ms. Tirado forget that she and her daughter also were airing her son's dirty laundry in the documentary *Big Pun: Still Not a Player*? They talked about the abuse he inflicted on his wife. Does she forget the footage that was shown in which Pun pistol-whipped his wife over a misplaced gun? I understand that parents love their children unconditionally, but wrong is wrong.

Samantha Strickland
Via e-mail

Our Bad

On page 92 of the July 2005 issue, we stated that Kanye West "took home this year's Grammy Award for Best New Artist." It was Maroon5 who won.

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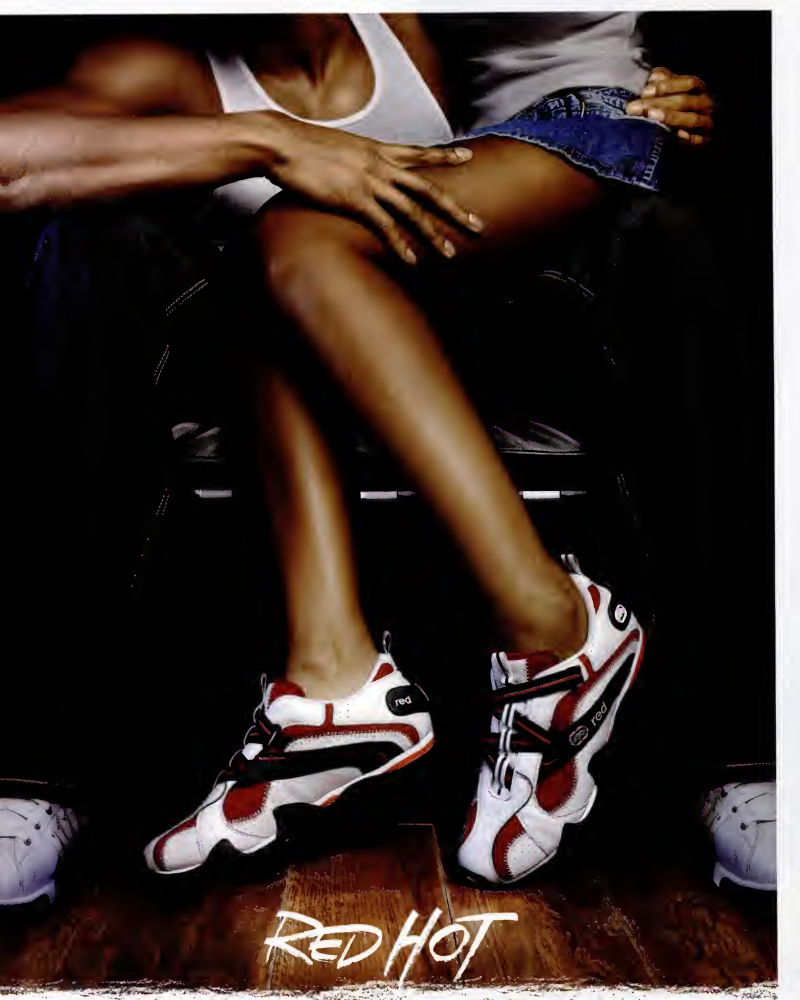
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SPEAK UP



Proposed new World Trade Center site.

> Last month we asked: **How should the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan be redeveloped? Should it have improved, state-of-the-art twin towers? Should it be solely a memorial? And why?** And you said:

I don't think that the towers should be rebuilt. With all the tragedy on that September day, it would be better to erect a memorial or museum.

Christine
Brooklyn, N.Y.

They should definitely build bigger, better, more advanced twin towers. It will serve as a testimony to the perseverance of the U.S. over terrorist threats.

Kwesi
Washington, D.C.

I think it should be both. I think the towers should be built in a new and fancy way with a memorial inside the buildings.

Elise
Chicago, Ill.

An improved design of the Twin Towers should be built. As a New Yorker, it would look bad for us to show weakness by not building our towers bigger and better. It still doesn't mean we can't have a beautiful memorial for the lost lives, though.

Jojo
New York, N.Y.

They should make it into a memorial site because of the number of people killed there. They shouldn't try to rebuild it, because it wouldn't be right for the families of the people who died.

Nay-Nay
Albany, N.Y.

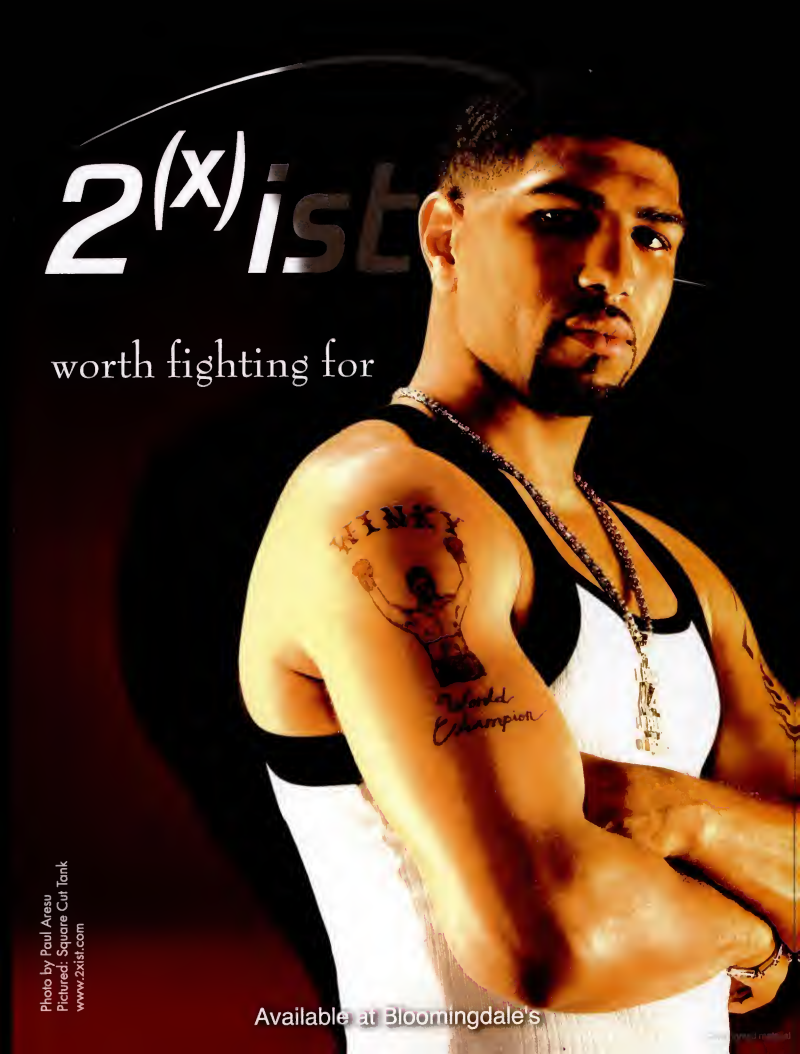
It should be decided by *all* of Manhattan. My heart is with New York. Their tax dollars are going to pay for it whether it is a building or dedication. Let the people choose.

Steven
Omaha, Neb.

Each issue, VIBE throws out a question racking all of our brains. Log on to ***vibe.com,*** and click on "Speak Up." Say your bit, include your full name and city where you live, and you just may see your response published in the magazine.

This month's question: **In light of his recent troubles, do you think Michael Jackson can resurrect his music career?**

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What up fans, wanna know what's poppin in August? Check out the dates of the hottest album releases this month and be the first to purchase your copy. And if you really wanna be in the know, text "JOIN" to the u-n-i-b-e (86423) right now to get free mvibe text alerts sent directly to your cell phone.

Also, Doritos Fresh Films is heading to 10 major cities looking for actors to cast in their teen films and get paid! Check out www.fresh-films.com where you can also watch and register to win prizes like Apple iTools and other great giveaways. Cuz, inNw?—if not Now, when?

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ALBUM RELEASES AUGUST '05

8/2 TEAIRRA MARI

8/23 KENNY LATTIMORE & CHANTE MOORE

8/30 CZARNOK
KANYE WEST
RIHANNA


TEAIRRA MARI


KANYE WEST


RIHANNA

CONCERT TOUR DATES AUGUST '05

SCREAM 4

8/3 LAS VEGAS, NV
8/4 LOS ANGELES, CA
8/6 OAKLAND, CA
8/8 DENVER, CO
8/10 KANSAS CITY, MO
8/11 LITTLE ROCK, AK
8/12 HOUSTON, TX
8/13 NEW OLREANS, LA
8/14 DALLAS, TX
8/17 GREENVILLE, SC
8/19 BIRMINGHAM, AL
8/20 MEMPHIS, TN
8/21 ATLANTA, GA
8/24 NEW YORK, NY
8/25 PHILADELPHIA, PA
8/26 WASHINGTON DC
8/27 GREENSBORO, NC

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Concert and album release dates are subject to change. Log on to innw.com or vibe.com for more information on how to infiltrate the entertainment business.

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ONLINE THROUGH AUGUST 16 COCA-COLA "CLASSIC HOST" SWEEPSTAKES

Coca-Cola and VIBE are giving you access with the "Classic Host" Sweepstakes! You could be off to New York City to co-host VIBE's Artist On The Verge Event! To enter, log on to **www.vibe.com** or send a postcard with your name, age, address, and phone number to "Classic Host Sweepstakes," C/O VIBE Magazine, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016. Complete rules appear at **www.vibe.com**. Entries must be received by **August 16**. No purchase necessary.

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AUGUST 2005 ARTISTS ON THE VERGE — New York City

VIBE presents the summer installment of Artists on the Verge — the new-music showcase sponsored by Verizon Wireline and Coca-Cola. Party with a New York City DJ and hear the hottest new urban music. Check the mail for your invitation.

AUGUST 23 VIBE VIXEN—NATIONWIDE

VIBE VIXEN's fall issue hits newsstands! VIBE VIXEN reflects the true character of our female readers, giving them everything they need to be inspired, creative, and empowered in an environment all their own. Vixens, pick up your copy today!

IN STORES SEPTEMBER 2005 *ARE ALL WOMEN LIKE THIS?*

A sensational and soul-searching book by urban novelist Gerard Abdul. He chronicles his life's journey with some of the women who shared his world and reflects on his moment of heavenly pleasures and hellish pain. A riveting read. Call **(973) 477-4197** to order your copy.

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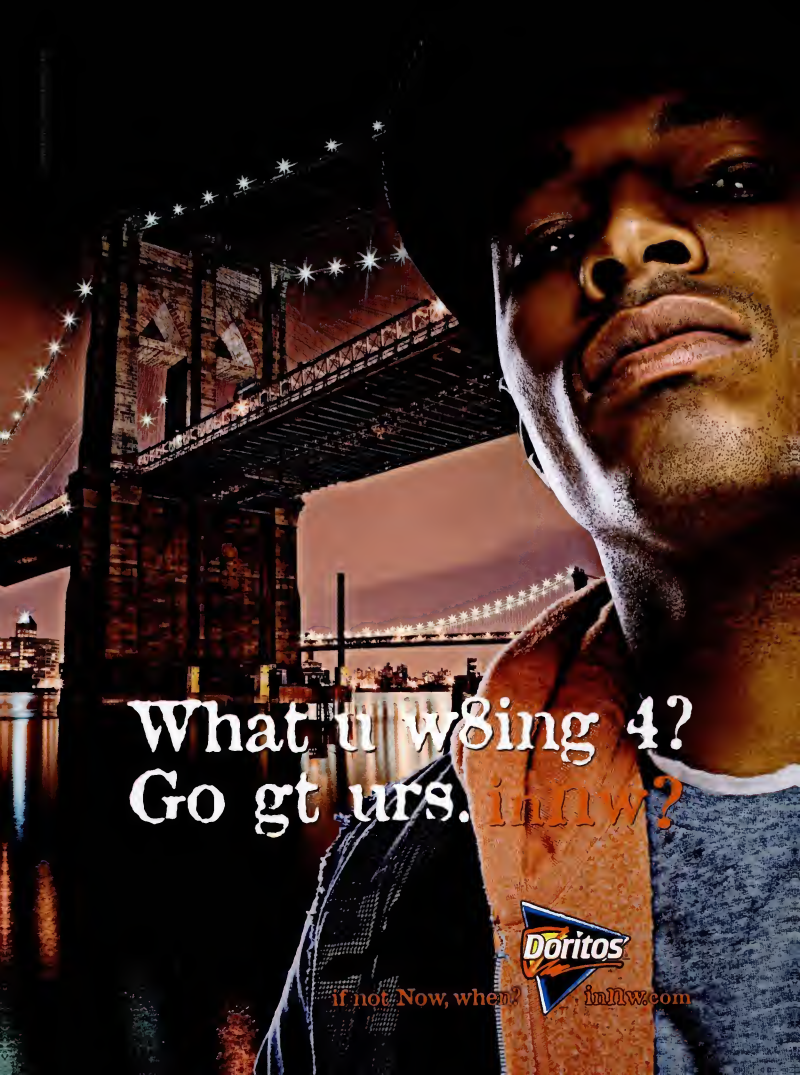
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CRATE EXPECTATIONS

Carrying a DJ's records was once *the* way to get your foot in the door. But digital technology has made the heavy lifting obsolete. **BY OLIVER WANG**

When technology takes two steps forward, it's often human labor that's forced to take a step back. Customer telephone dialing for long distance calls in the 1950s eliminated the need for exchange operators. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Illustration by **EDDIE GUY**



The nationwide spread of ATMs in the 1980s and '90s affected the role of bank tellers. And now, technology is threatening one of hip hop's most time-honored entry-level positions: the crate carrier.

As far back as star DJs had records to lug, they've had a crew of newbies to help haul their crates. Many of hip hop's most lauded DJs had humble beginnings in the profession, whether it was Jam Master Jay apprenticing under established Queens spin doctors or Funkmaster Flex carting crates for DJ Chuck Chillout. Even future moguls got their start as crate carriers, such as Violator Management/Records CEO "Baby" Chris Lighty, who began his long career as a record lugger for DJ Red Alert.

Until recently, the average radio or club gig required DJs to pack dozens of records in 25-pound crates that needed mad muscle to be hauled. But recent advances in digital DJ

Hauling crates opened a window into the larger rap world.

technology have eliminated the extra weight. Whether it's CD turntables, computer-based DJ systems like Serato, or the inevitable invention of an iPod mixer, DJs have gone from toting hundreds of pounds of vinyl to carrying twice as much music in less than 100 ounces.

It was no glamour job, but hauling crates opened a window into the larger rap world lurking behind the scenes. Lighty says he also acted as a gatekeeper for Red Alert and, through that, got to meet everyone in hip hop. "I saw the power and influence the music and the DJ had over the masses," he says. "It helped pave the way for my desire to be in the music business."

It may be that the profession is destined to go the way of bowling-pin setters and gas-lamp lighters. Or maybe big shot DJs will have their Fonzworth Bentleys lug laptop bags instead of milk crates. Either way, one of the unsung pillars of the rap community is on the cusp of quietly fading away as hip hop increasingly gets digi with it. Rest in peace, crate carriers. You'll be missed.

> 10 THINGS I'VE LEARNED BY SEAN PAUL

1 Even if you travel around the world to perform, whenever you get a chance to see what's up, you definitely gotta do it. I went to Egypt last year and walked up and down the ancient pyramids smoking weed. It was great.

2 They say what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. What that really means is your money is gonna stay there.

3 Jamaica may be just a small dot on the map, but we're a very powerful small dot. I just wish that our great music could empower us to take control of the bullshit that happens here in our country day to day.

4 Fitness gets your mind in gear. Our bodies are not meant to just sit down and chill the hell out.

5 I don't wanna sound cynical, but I believe that we're all born alone and we're gonna leave here alone. We shouldn't depend on our friends like family because people change, so it's better to just appreciate different personalities and wish them the best.

6 Our brains trick us into thinking that we're doing the right thing all the time.

7 Although money can spoil your personality, money doesn't have to change it. Live within your means and be kind to others. Once you know yourself, you can just live simply, and the money flows, dog.



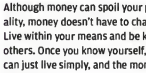
JUST A MOMENT: Sean Paul sits back to contemplate.

8 Sometimes people around you are your enemies, but it's all good because you can write songs about them.

9 If you work hard, what's supposed to come to you is gonna come to you through the spirit of karma. In Jamaica, we say "Every likkle make a mockle," which means every little thing you do leads to bigger things.

10 As much as I've experienced already, I still have something to learn every day.

SLANGUISTICS



Turning lane: *n.* Also called a Houston left, it's the traffic lane reserved for left-hand turns. It can also be a place, however, for everything from flossing candy-painted cars and courting ladies to drug deals and 'jackings. On "Turning Lane," Mike Jones boasts, "I'm holding wood wheel in the turning lane / Piece and chain shining in the turning lane." "Gripping Grain" showcases Screwed Up Click's Z-Ro bragging, "I'm ballin', crawling in the turning lane."

ANTHONY MANDLER

RUNNING NUMBERS: PEEP THE MATHEMATICS. 2: NUMBER OF TIMES PER WEEK THE PHILADELPHIA 76ERS' GUARD ALLEN IVERSON GETS HIS HAIR BRAIDED DURING THE NBA SEASON. **951:** [illegible] **100:** NUMBER OF MILLIGRAMS OF CAFFEINE IN A CAN OF CRUNK!!! ENERGY DRINK.

Illustration by **BOB ECKSTEIN**

Bobbito plays the tracks. **Jermaine Dupri** states the facts.

There's an old saying, "Everything he touches turns to gold." In Jermaine Dupri's case, the proper word would be *platinum*—as reflected in the sales of many of the artists he's worked with, including Usher, Mariah Carey, T.I., and Bow Wow. But don't let JD's pop success fool you. He's a B-boy on every level, from dancing with rap icons like Whodini in the '80s to working on tags with former graf writer Coy Adams. And as president of Virgin Records' urban division, the 32-year-old Atlantan is still making moves. Look out for the ton of artists JD will be breaking out in the future.

> Billy Stewart—"Summertime" (1966)

JD: Hot! Seems like I've heard it before.

B: George Gershwin's composition has been covered a million times.

JD: Feels like Miami Beach air. DJs play beats outside with live instrumentation. It's loose, like, "We gonna jam!"

B: The drums on this are strong for a '60s record.

> Heavy—"Do for You" (2004)

JD: It reminds me of the Brand New Heavies.

B: Word! N'Dea Davenport used to come hear me spin, but I haven't seen her in a minute. The Heavies had some joints!

JD: This record has a good vibe with an element of jazz. It's new and old mixed together. If it were my group, I'd beef the drums up a little.

> Jay Dee, feat. Frank N Dank—"Pause" (2001)

JD: He got my name, that's f'ed up! Just kidding! The hook and verse didn't split up to make the song go anywhere. It's hot, though, like Tribe or Kanye mixed with what Slum Village [Jay Dee's old group] did.

> Keyshia Cole—"I Just Want It to Be Over" (2005)

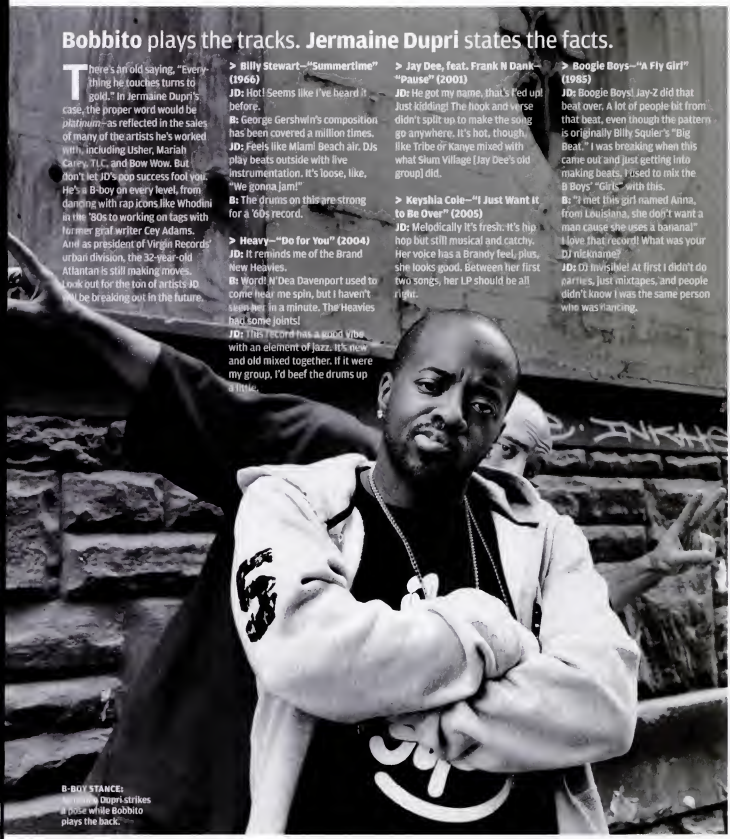
JD: Melodically it's fresh. It's hip hop but still musical and catchy. Her voice has a Brandy feel, plus, she looks good. Between her first two songs, her LP should be all right.

> Boogie Boys—"A Fly Girl" (1985)

JD: Boogie Boys! Jay-Z did that beat over. A lot of people hit from that beat, even though the pattern is originally Billy Squier's "Big Beat." I was breaking when this came out and just getting into making beats. I used to mix the B Boys' "Girls" with this.

B: "I met this girl named Anna, from Louisiana, she don't want a man cause she uses a banana!" I love that record! What was your DJ nickname?

JD: DJ Invisible! At first I didn't do parties, just mixtapes, and people didn't know I was the same person who was dancing.



B-BOY STANCE: Jermaine Dupri strikes a pose while Bobbito plays the back.

8,698: NUMBER OF MILES LUDACRIS TRAVELED FROM ATLANTA TO DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, TO FILM THE VIDEO FOR "PIMPIN' ALL OVER THE WORLD." **88:** [illegible]

Photograph by **ANGELA BOATWRIGHT**

GOSSIP FOLKS

Radio queen **WENDY WILLIAMS,** who recently dropped her debut mixtape, spills the beans on some of hip hop's juiciest controversies.



DISHY DIVA: Wendy *knows.*

> The Death of Jay-Z and Damon Dash's Dynasty:
Well, there's been the rumor that Beyoncé wanted some Rocawear clothing, and when she went to Dame for it, he wasn't having it. Jay supposedly heard this and was like, "Oh, it's like that? I see how it is now." But clearly that isn't enough to break up a whole empire. If you ask me, there were cracks in the foundation to begin with, and they were never all buddy-buddy. All that talk of them still going to each other's family gatherings is bull, in my opinion.



> Hip Hop Trapped in the Closet:
Within urban culture, if you get 10 female artists in the room, seven of them of have got down! In this business, everybody's getting down, whether it's to further their career or whatever. Yes, it was refuted, but people couldn't stop talking about Missy and Eva and Tweet, and Missy and Trina. And Missy and Missy and Missy, you know? Why did Tweet leave Violator? Is that because Missy and Eva are close? And Missy's more powerful than Tweet, so Missy's able to say, "Go somewhere."



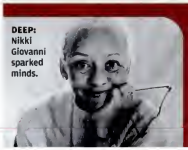
> Swinging Hip Hop Couples:
Several couples out there stay together just to stay together. She knows he's fucking around. He knows that she is, although he'll flip out if he catches her. What about Juanita and Michael Jordan? I've heard stories about a lot of couples. Not rumors, stories. The biggest couple you constantly hear about is Kimora and Russell. But I don't know how swingy that is now that they're married. Whatever the situation, whether it has three legs or two legs, it's okay as long as everybody comes back home.



> Why Mase Found God:
Puffy was his boss—hook, line, and sinker. I believe that Mase wasn't getting the money that he was supposed to be getting based on all the recognition that he was bringing to Bad Boy. Also, from what I understand, he couldn't go to Harlem without getting robbed. But then again, some say Busta Rhymes can't go to Brooklyn without getting robbed.

> Dave Chappelle Just Loses It:
My sources say that Comedy Central is planning to march on without him. But I'm also hearing whispers that his first and second seasons thrived because he had a wealth of jokes and skits written by his team prior to the deal, so he probably ran out of material. *Jozen Cummings*

BETWEEN THE LINES



DEEP: Nikki Giovanni sparked minds.

"You're like a book of poetry—Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni / Turn one page and there's my mommy."
—Kanye West, "Hey Mama"

Lots of people get teased and called "mama's boy," but Kanye West embraces the role. In his Mother's Day anthem, he big-ups two of the most storied black female poets. The ego-tripping rapper's allusion to *Ego-Tripping and Other Poems for Young People,* by author Giovanni, reveals his true inspiration. Her poem "Nikki-Rosa" anticipates West's filial-love lyrics as she writes: "...If you become famous or something / They never talk about how happy you were to have / Your mother / All to yourself...." He may have dropped out of college, but Kanye's clearly done the required reading. *Paul Farber*

WILLIAMS: MARK MAINZ; DASH, JAY-Z: RAY MICKSHAW/WIREIMAGE; ELLIOTT: TALES; TIMBERLEE, JOHNNY: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE

6: NUMBER OF CANS OF LOW-CARB PROTEIN SHAKES EMINEM REQUIRED IN HIS DRESSING ROOM DURING A 2003 TOUR IN JAPAN. **7:** THE NUMBER OF YEARS FANS WAITED FOR DR. DRE TO FOLLOW UP *THE CHRONIC* WITH *DR. DRE 2001.* **6:** THE NUMBER OF YEARS FANS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR DR. DRE TO FOLLOW UP *DR. DRE 2001* WITH *DETOX.* SO FAR.



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THINK™ OUTSIDE THE BUN

TACO BELL

LINE 'EM UP

Since rappers often compare their game to footballers, we asked the Oakland Raiders' trash-talking, QB-sacking defensive tackle **WARREN SAPP** to put together an all-star rap offensive squad. Hut-hut, hike!



> RUNNING BACK:
Jay-Z: He's real slick with his words. The way he manipulates his flows over beats is like an elusive back. Jay can weave in and out between the blockers. Plus, your running back has to be strong and steady, and Jay has locked it down every summer, so I know he can handle it.

> FULLBACK:
Fat Joe: He's a big boy and can put the pain on people. And he's gangsta, so he won't be afraid to get in there and bust some heads.

> QUARTERBACK:
Dr. Dre: Dre's gotta be my leader. He's worked with Jay-Z, Snoop Dogg, and Eminem and makes beats for different artists, so he knows how to keep people happy. And he's won championships with Death Row Records and Aftermath Entertainment, so he can build dynasties.

> WIDE RECEIVER:
Trick Daddy: He's crazy! He's my slot receiver so he'll go over the middle and go after the tough catches. You need a receiver like that, one who won't be afraid of contact. I think that's Daddy Dollars.

> TIGHT END:
Nas: You have to be smart to play tight end. You have to block, but go out there and catch the ball, too. I think Nas could do that because he makes all kinds of songs. But I'd have a three-receiver set anyway, so he would just be another receiver.

> RIGHT GUARD:
Mase: He's a good guy to have on the inside. He's into religion now, so he won't take too much stuff. But I need my team to be hard. That's why I can't have any R&B guys. Also, I only listen to rap, all day long.

> RIGHT TACKLE:
Beanie Sigel: He's a big boy, so he'd be all right blocking on the outside. And Beans is nice, you ain't know? [*Rapping*] "Two nines like Warren Sapp." [*Laughs*] Yeah, he's there helping to block the outside.

> CENTER:
Ludacris: At first I wanted him at tight end, because he's versatile, too. But he's a wild guy, and you gotta be wild to play center and be banging heads. He'll mix it up down there in the trenches.

> LEFT GUARD:
Jadakiss: 'Kiss got the streets on lock, so he'd be all right, too. I wouldn't have to worry about him down there letting backs get through. Jada's a problem for these dudes. He can handle blocking the inside.

> LEFT TACKLE:
Luke: He's got my back and always has. Your left tackle guards your blind spot, so you gotta really trust them. Uncle Luke was one of the first to rep Miami, and he keeps holding it down. So I wouldn't have anybody else here but him.

> WIDE RECEIVER:
Eminem: He's crazy like Randy Moss. Eminem got a lot of album sales so he can take his time and go deep. He don't have to worry about the quick pickup. I'll keep the defense honest with Eminem as my deep threat.

25: NUMBER OF SHOWER CAPS RAPPER BIZARRE USED IN THREE WEEKS WHILE RECORDING HIS DEBUT SOLO CD, *HANNICAP CIRCUS*. **756,900:** OPENING WEEKEND GROSS (IN DOLLARS) OF STEVE MOVIE(T). **28,000,000:** WEEKEND BOXOFFICE OPENING (IN DOLLARS) FOR MOVIES STARRING WILL SMITH.

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FULL-TIME HACK MOVE

Cyberthieves exposed the contents of Paris Hilton's T-Mobile Sidekick and Vida Guerra's cell phone and forever changed the meaning of PDA to "Public Displays of Ass." Imagine what you may find inside some other celebrities' camera phones and other devices if they were hacked.



MICHAEL JACKSON

Instant Messages with R. Kelly (urinemind007)

Urinemind007: Do you think they're serious about putting me in the pen?
MJlovesthekids: The playpen? Ooh, I sincerely hope so!
Urinemind007: You're a very sick man.
MJlovesthekids: I'm not a man. I'm a giraffe, and all the good little boys get to touch me in my petting zoo. I would invite you to join us, but your lifestyle could permanently damage impressionable children.

E-mails
TO: Macaulay Culkin
SUBJECT: That Night We Both Drank Too Much....
TO: Janet Jackson
SUBJECT: Nipplegate? Our Family Had Honor Once!

Recent Web Sites
nickelodeon.com
toysrus.com

Phone Numbers
Frankie Muniz
Verne Troyer



LIL' KIM

IM with Dr. Robert M. Rey (scarface90210)

scarface90210: What can I do for you, Kim?
KimposterDD: I'm worried my look may not go over so well in prison. I spent all this money trying to look like black Barbie, now I'd be better off looking like the Game. Maybe I could get some more work done and make a run for it.
scarface90210: If you do, I suggest you keep your lil' Kims under wraps. If they pop out, it's a dead giveaway, and those Junior M.A.F.I.A. fellas may testify again.

E-mails
TO: Diana Ross
SUBJECT: Don't Touch Me Again—I Have Feelings Too (Not In My Titties)

Images
A picture of Lil' Cease with "snitch" written in red

KANYE WEST

IM with John Mayer (mistersoftee)

JEULuva: That Kanye West, he's so hot right now.
mistersoftee: Yes, Kanye, you're revolutionary. Who else could bring Jesus to the booty club?
JEULuva: Who else could be seen cavorting with you? He should get five mikes for that alone. Seriously. Any magazine that disagrees diminishes its credibility.
mistersoftee: Plus, you're so fly I hear Brad Pitt's breaking his jaw and dressing like Carlton Banks just to compete.

E-mails
TO: Fonzworth Bentley
SUBJECT: Where Did You Get Those Suspenders?
TO: Pope Benedict XVI
SUBJECT: "Jesus Walks," a Hot New Psalm...I'm Sayin' Tho!



P. DIDDY

IM with Paula Abdul (WhoisPaulaAbdul?)

Mymouthwontclose: Judging is sooo strenuous! All the 2-waying and showing disinterest about *Making the Band 3* contestants nearly dehydrated my lips once—nearly!
WhoisPaulaAbdul?: Tell me about it. I lose sleep trying to decide whether to praise, puff, or stroke the next *American Idol*. All the stress is giving me acne. Which reminds me, does Proactiv Solution really work?
Mymouthwontclose: Have you seen Craig Mack's face lately?
WhoisPaulaAbdul?: No
Mymouthwontclose: Haha! Neither have I!

E-mails
TO: Jadakiss
SUBJECT: Wanna Buy Back Your Publishing?

Web Sites
proactiv.com
amihotornot.com

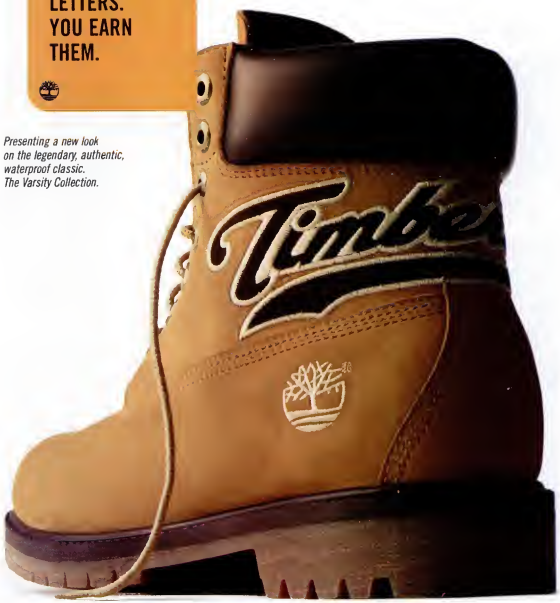


13: NUMBER OF TIMES MIKE JONES REPEATS HIS PHONE NUMBER, 281-330-8004, ON *WHO'S MIKE JONES?* **236:** DAYS SINCE JAY-Z WAS OFFICIALLY APPOINTED PRESIDENT AND CEO OF DEF JAM RECORDINGS, AS OF AUGUST 1. **403,000:** DIFFERENCE IN FIRST-WEEK SALES BETWEEN JAY-Z'S MOST RECENT RELEASE, *THE BLACK ALBUM*, AND MEMPHIS BLEEK'S MOST RECENT ALBUM, *534*.

Illustration by **YOUNG-MIN YOON**

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JUST A LITTLE BIT

VIDEO DIRECTOR Little X does it real big.

Not to brag, but Little X kind of got his start thanks to VIBE. When he was an 18-year-old production assistant at MuchMusic in Toronto, X (aka Julien Lutz) read an article in the magazine on Hype Williams in '95 and decided video directing was his calling. He wrote a letter to then assistant editor, Mimi Valdés, who had written the story, hoping to get in touch with Williams. She blessed him with the number, and X sent his demo reel—but there was no response. Undaunted, he trekked to Williams's New York office to pick up his reel and pestered his way into an internship. Since then, X has directed more than 125 videos, including Usher's "Yeah!" and Sean Paul's "Get Busy." Please don't ask us for his contact info, though.



AND THERE THERE WAS X: Little X keeps his videos top shelf by...



...checking the frame...

> MY RESPONSIBILITIES:
My job is to create fantasies and then make things beautiful. After coming up with the initial concept, I have to sit down and storyboard the whole video. Not necessarily for the client, but for myself. After boarding, I sit down with the lighting guys, and they work off my ideas. I also have to scout locations and keep in mind how long traveling is going to take and how long it will take to get the equipment up.

> MY 9-TO-5:
I typically get a week to prepare a treatment and scout and hire a crew, and then only one or two days to shoot. An average shoot day is about 14 hours, but it can run as long as 20 hours. Then I have a week to edit, drop it to tape, do color correction, and make it pop. After that, all that's left is to clean up some pimples.



...making sure the execution matches the concept...

> SKILLS NEEDED FOR THIS JOB:
To direct, you have to have some knowledge of what everyone on set does, but you also have to let them be the experts at things like lighting and rigging. You don't necessarily need to know exactly what they're saying. That's why you hire a director of photography.



...overseeing the choreography...

> THE WORST PART OF MY JOB:
There's too much to do in too little time, and you're always fighting the budget to do things you really can't afford to do.

> WHY IT'S ALL WORTH IT:
Videos allow you great creative freedom, so it's worth some of the headaches. Plus, seeing the world is great. I was just in South Africa shooting with Ludacris, and I love going to Jamaica.



...providing artists like Ciara...

> MY ADVICE ON GETTING INTO THE GAME:
Go to film school. And if you don't, go to the bookstore and get every single book on photography and cinematography. Books like *Cinematography*, by Kris Malkiewicz, and *Lighting for Film & Electronic Cinematography*, by Dave Viera, are still on my bookshelf. Then go and intern on video sets and learn what goes on in practice—that was my school. The other thing is, you really can't give a fuck. At 19, you're young enough that people will forgive the fact that you're annoying. After you direct a few small videos, try and get with a production company. It's like a music label—you sign a contract with them, then they worry about the business stuff, and you get to concentrate on the creative side. The hustle never stops. *Jesse Erenberg*



...putting together the production team and making sure the crew is right.

0025800: KIMORA LEE SIMMONS'S MUG SHOT NUMBER AFTER HER ARREST LAST SUMMER FOR ALLEGEDLY CARRYING POT. **43:** NUMBER OF RADIO STATIONS OWNED BY CLEAR CHANNEL COMMUNICATIONS BEFORE THE 1996 TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT WAS PASSED. **1,207:** NUMBER OF RADIO STATIONS OWNED BY CLEAR CHANNEL EIGHT YEARS LATER, IN 2004.

Photographs by **EUNJEAN SONG**


My inspiration knows no boundaries.
Multi-media artist, Sanford Biggers, continues to defy convention in his latest work by blending African and Asian folk influences with global pop culture.
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V.S.
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DEM BOYZ

JOHN SINGLETON showed the world the conditions that birthed gangsta rap.



SITTIN' SIDEWAYS: John Singleton kept it all 'hood in 1991.

Film director John Singleton has trusted his gut from jump. When he shot the semi-autobiographical Boyz N the Hood *in 1991, he believed the raw materials of life in his South Central hometown were worthy of Hollywood backing. His instincts proved right: The $7 million movie not only earned him an Oscar nomination—Singleton was both the youngest, at 24, and the first African-American to earn the nod for best director—but it also spawned an entire genre of films. "When it came out," he says with satisfaction, "everybody from the neighborhood saw it and loved it; everybody knew which character they were. Ice Cube's character, Doughboy, is my best friend. We used to call him Fatback."*

Since then, Singleton, 37, has created a string of rap-generation films, including Poetic Justice, Higher Learning, *and* Baby Boy. *Earlier this year, he produced and financed the critically touted* Hustle & Flow. *Next up: an adaptation of Marvel Comics'* Luke Cage *for the big screen.*

Boyz N the Hood was the movie my friends and I talked about making while we sat on the porch. I was at USC film school when I walked into a meeting with potential backers from Columbia. They said, "We understand you want to make a film," and I said, I *am* making a film, whether you back it or not. And they said, "What makes you think you *can* make a film?" And I said, I've made films before, which was a lie. I'd only made Super-8 movies in school. But I think they liked my hustle, so they took it.

I'm still trying to be an independent filmmaker, and I feel like I've been able to do what I want to do. But my one big complaint was that people of color can't greenlight movies or put them into production in Hollywood. So I used my own experience and connections to finance and greenlight *Hustle & Flow*; no studio in Hollywood would make a film like that about a pimp. My next step is to find new filmmakers who are like I was when I was starting out, trying to do films in a different way. I'm raising capital, and I plan to be the guy to help a whole new generation of directors. I'm gonna put the future in *our* hands. *Julianne Shepherd*

WESTSIDE STORY

Singleton's opus opened the floodgates for movies on Los Angeles's underworld. Here's a breakdown of four other takes on thug life in the City of Angels.

1) *South Central* (1992) Steve Anderson's drama, based on Donald Bakeer's *Crips*, tells the story of a man balancing gang life with fatherhood and his transformation in prison. More plot than gunplay, *South Central* is surprisingly nonsensational, considering Oliver Stone executive produced. **2) *Menace II Society* (1993)** The Hughes brothers' overwhelmingly bleak story of a Watts pusher trying to get out before he gets deuced starts with a gunshot and ends with you devastated. Heavy on grit and gore and light on character development, it was the Cam'Ron to *Boyz N the Hood*'s Jay-Z. **3) *Bound By Honor* (1993)** A mind-blowing three-hour epic about power, choice, trust, and family. Taylor Hackford's tale of two half-brothers and their half-*puerto* cousin rolling deep in East L.A. It's *The Godfather* of Chicano street culture and just as long—but blood bonds and gully subplots make the time pass like nothing. **4) *Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)* (1994)** Allison Anders's story of *cholas* in Echo Park, in which one shady boyfriend stirs beef between best friends, was the first mainstream film about Chicana girl gangs but was criticized as unrealistic. No two-timing *pendejo* could break the bonds of sisterhood in real life. *J.S.*



SINGLETON: EVERETT COLLECTION

19: NUMBER OF SONGS ON *THE MASSACRE* WITH SING-SONGY CHORUSES. **21:** NUMBER OF SONGS ON 50 CENT'S *THE MASSACRE*. **205:** NUMBER OF PAGES WORRIED RAPPERS HAVE TO READ THROUGH TO SEE WHETHER KARRINE STEFFANS NAMES THEM IN HER TELL-ALL BOOK, *CONFESSIONS OF A VIDEO VIXEN*.

Film fanatic who wants to be the next big thing in movies.

MM-535 with megapixel camera and camcorder



MM-535 (service by Sprint)



F9100 (service by Cingular)

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F9100 with Instant Messenger

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VX8000 (service by Verizon)

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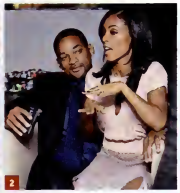
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1


2


5

PIC ME A WINNER

1. Glowing up **GOTTI:** The tanned twosome of **CARMINE** and **JOHN** get down with the ladies at *King* magazine's editor-in-chief Datwon Thomas's birthday party at Ten's World-Class Cabaret in New York City.
2. I just wanna tape you: **WILL SMITH** actually listens to his wife, **JADA PINKETT-SMITH**, at a press event for Carol's Daughter at the 40/40 Club in Manhattan.
3. "Wait 'til you see our flick." Ying yang twins **CHRIS ROCK** and **ADAM SANDLER** promote *The Longest Yard* at a taping for *106 & Park* in New York.
4. Who's bad? **WEBBIE** plants a big one on **TRINA** during his video shoot for "Bad Chick" in Miami.
5. "I'm a survivor." **CIARA** does her best Beyoncé impression at Hot 97's Summer Jam at Giants Stadium in New Jersey.
6. Soul...Twisted? **BILAL** looks like he's been living in the fast lane at Common's album release party for *Be* at P.M. in N.Y.C.
7. Umi says **MOS DEF** should put out another Black Star album, but he just wants to play the drums at Common's shindig.
8. "Please listen to my album." Multiplatinum producer **JERMAINE DUPRI** gets the sales pitch from **COMMON** and manager Derek Dudley at his party.
9. Where my dog at? **MASHONDA** makes **SWIZZ BEATZ** beg for the puppy back on the set of her "Back of da Club" video in N.Y.C.


3


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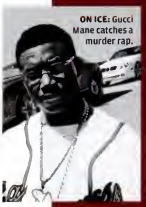
1, 2, 3, 7, 8: JOHNNY NUÑEZ/NUNEZPHOTO.COM; 4: JULIA BEVERLY; 5: WALIK GOSHORN; 6: RAY TAMARRA; 9: SOUL BROTHER

6: NUMBER OF VIDEOS THE BLACK EYED PEAS MADE BEFORE THEIR BREAKTHROUGH HIT, "WHERE IS THE LOVE?" FEATURING JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE. **4:** THE NUMBER OF SONGS ABOUT CHEATING ON JOHN LEGEND'S DEBUT LP, *GET LIFTED*. **10.6:** THE PERCENTAGE OF DIVORCED RESIDENTS IN LEGEND'S NATIVE STATE, OHIO, ACCORDING TO THE 2000 U.S. CENSUS.


PHOTO W MONTREAL
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FOR THE RECORD

> Atlanta rapper **Gucci Mane,** né Radric Davis, turned himself in on May 19 to face murder charges in the shooting of a man, identified as Henry Lee Clark III, at a friend's residence on May 10. Davis's lawyer claims the MC was attacked by Clark and four other men, and acted in self-defense (see "Cold as Ice," page 194).... // On May 13, **50 Cent** reached a plea deal for a May 2004 incident at a Springfield, Mass., nightclub in which he allegedly injured three women when he jumped into the crowd. The 30-year-old MC will reportedly have to attend counseling, take random drug tests, and pay the women's medical expenses.... // Songwriters Anthony Jeffries and Vincent Hart filed a $200,000 lawsuit against **Lil' Kim** on April 28 in Manhattan's State Supreme Court, claiming they were never compensated for several songs they contributed to her 2003 album, *La Bella Mafia*.... // On May 9, **Eminem's** lawyer, Howard Hertz, announced the Detroit rapper had settled a lawsuit with Apple Computer that was filed in 2004 after the company ran commercials using his hit song "Lose Yourself" allegedly without permission.... // **Justo Faison,** 36, a promoter for various record labels and founder of the annual Mixtape Awards, was killed on the morning of May 14 when his SUV crashed in Richmond, Va.... // **Stevie Wonder** and **Busta Rhymes** made the first-ever music video for the visually impaired with the clip, "So What the Fuss." Busta narrates the video for the song, which is featured on Wonder's new album, *A Time to Love*.



ON ICE: Gucci Mane catches a murder rap.

THE LOW DOWN ON THE DOWN LOW

VIBE CONFIDENTIAL



FLOWERPOT HEAD: N.O.R.E. takes the slang expression literally.

As your fearless celebutarian, **VC** humbly admits that we've fallen victim to a PR-driven "hype" or two–**J.Lo** and **Diddy,** Bennifer, **Jay-Z's** retirement, **Mase's** comeback, Y2K.... But we shoulda known better when it came to Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley, and now, we're not just gonna fall for the **Tom Cruise** and **Katie Holmes** okey-doke either.... To keep it extra crispy while we're at it, **VC** is rejecting this whole **Johnny Gill**-and-**Chilli**-from-TLC supposed love match, too! Application for genuine carnal attraction...denied! But speaking of NE, **VC** does hear that **Ronnie DeVoe** is engaged to the young and lovely **Shamari Fears,** formerly of the teen group **Blaque.**

POTHEAD

Moving on to more hip hop strife...it's **Nas** versus **N.O.R.E.** Even **VC** forgot about the bad blood from Nas perplexingly calling out his former pal, telling N.O.R.E. to step his game up. Well, we hear at a recent P. Diddy party in New York, N.O.R.E. stepped up, asking Esco, "Why your shirt all tight like Pharrell's?" and threw a flowerpot at him. We also hear that it was all fisticuffs after that.... **VC** eagerly awaits the Rematch: Cream Pie Time....

GAME, SET, MATCH

And before **VC** leaves you to your morally upright lives, let us sully ourselves one mo' gin. We all suspected the truce was a sham from jump, and his N.Y.C. Hot 97 Summer Jam antics only confirmed it. But now, **VC** hears in addition to "300 Bars and Runnin'," the 250-bars-too-many diss song he leaked to mixtapes, **the Game** has recorded a scathing **50 Cent** diss for a new **DJ Kay Slay** album. But let's keep that on the the hush-hush and strictly on QT.

VIBE.COM EXCLUSIVE

SPOON'S 'TOONS: What if the spirits of Chris Rock, Bill Maher, Carrie Bradshaw, and the MTV character Daria possessed a little girl born to immigrant parents in the city of Chicago? Meet *Seven Spoon*, the hilarious, edgy comic strip by Olusola "Shala Esquire" Akintunde. Log on to ***vibe.com*** for the full cartoon every Wednesday.

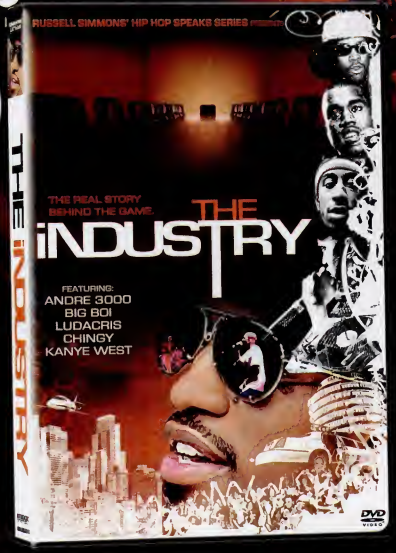


N.O.R.E. ILLUSTRATION: CHRIS TANNENBAUM; GUCCI MANE: BIG CAT RECORDS

0: NUMBER OF REQUESTS GB RECORDS, TAPES & COMPACT DISCS IN HAYS, KAN., GOT FOR THE GAME'S CD, *THE DOCUMENTARY*, AT PRESS TIME. **189:** CHART POSITION OF JA RULE'S ALBUM, *R.U.L.E.*, THE WEEK 50 CENT'S *THE MASSACRE* DEBUTED ATOP THE *BILLBOARD* 200. **3:** NUMBER OF CANS OF COCA-COLA IT TAKES TO EQUAL THE CAFFEINE IN A CAN OF CRUNK!! ENERGY DRINK.

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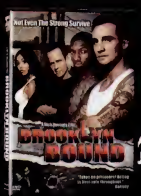
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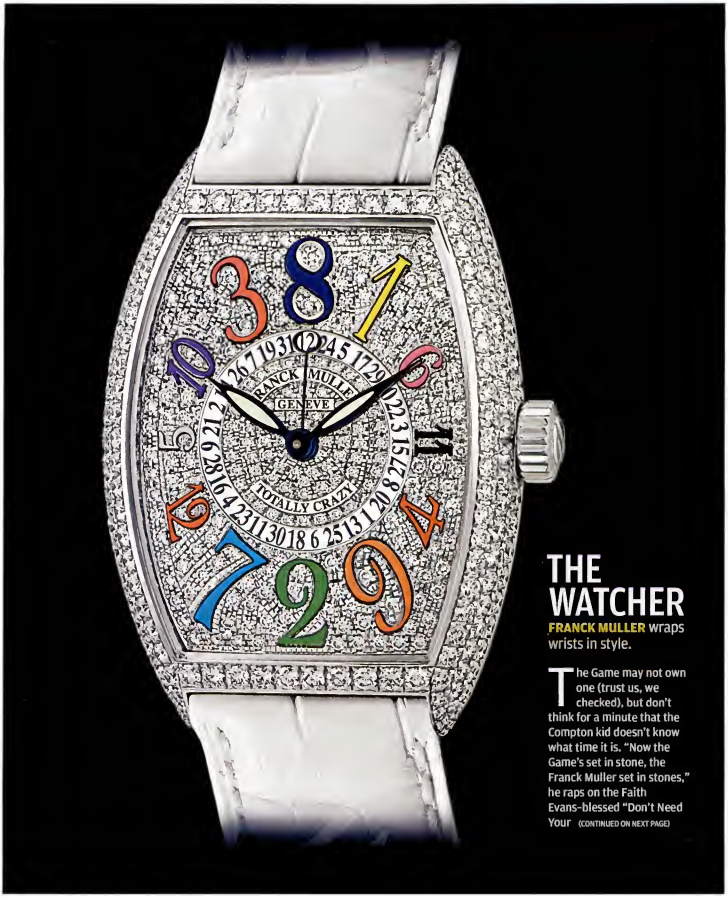
stevemadden.com

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photo credit: William Claxton

Get caught reading.

A MESSAGE FROM AAP

Alicia Keys Gets Caught Reading.



THE WATCHER

FRANCK MULLER wraps wrists in style.

The Game may not own one (trust us, we checked), but don't think for a minute that the Compton kid doesn't know what time it is. "Now the Game's set in stone, the Franck Muller set in stones," he raps on the Faith Evans-blessed "Don't Need Your (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



Tourbillion Minute Repeater with Perpetual Calendar



Master Banker Date-Moon



Evolution 3-1

Love," from his multiplatinum debut *The Documentary*. But while rocking a timepiece by watchmaker Franck Muller may be just a dream for him, it's been a daily operation for the likes of Jay-Z and heiress Paris Hilton as well as former President Bill Clinton for years. And now that rap young bucks like Pusha T of the Clipse and Young Jeezy are stepping up their wrist game, Franck Muller's timepieces are really starting to fly.

"Our brand is very young, but we listened to what a new breed of more hip consumers wanted, and our progress has been remarkable," says company CFO Miguel Payro. Franck Muller's rise can't be directly linked to the hip hop set, but the impact of the mike check, at least in terms of brand recognition, is undeniable. Founded only 14 years ago by Swiss master watchmaker, designer, and restoration-specialist Muller and Swiss-trained Armenian jewelry maker Vartan Sirmakes, the company is known for its artistic and horological ingenuity. "Franck Muller pushes the creative limits," says Philip Duffell, store manager for world-renowned watch dealer Cellini. "And their dials are remarkable in their beauty and rarity."

Connoisseurs appreciate FM's hand-assembled, hand-engraved, mechanical timepieces with technical features such as the Tri-axial Tourbillon, which minimizes timekeeping errors caused by the Earth's gravitational pull, and the Grande and Petite Sonnerie multitonal chimes that sound on the quarter-hour and on the hour, like a grandfather clock on your wrist. In addition to more classical lines such as the Master Banker and Casablanca, FM offers playful collections like the Vegas, which includes a miniature roulette game, and the Crazy Hours, in which the hours are positioned nonsequentially. But it's the more practical Cintrée Curvex design, which allows the watches to conform to individual wrists, that impresses avid collector Swizz Beatz. "Even though I got a small wrist, they fit like they're custom made," he says.

> Rocking a Franck Muller has been a daily operation for Jay-Z, Paris Hilton, and Bill Clinton for years.

With innovative designs—as well as precious metal and gemstone personalization—Franck Muller is a natural fit for someone on the way to the top. "The Franck Muller client is extremely conscious of their style and wants to show off their new timepiece to others," says Duffell. "They look upon FM as a lifestyle statement." So it's not surprising that one of the first hip hop high rollers to recognize the brand was P. Diddy, who asked stylist June Ambrose to lace him for Nas's 1999 "Hate Me Now" video. "Franck Muller has a certain sense of opulence and decadence," says Ambrose. "It's like wearing a Bentley on your wrist."

Make that several Bentleys. Although you can pick up an FM for $5,000, serious collectors invest up to $1 million for icy limited editions. But to those with the dough, it's a price worth paying. "It just demands attention because of how regal it looks," says T.I., who rocked a $100,800 rose-gold, diamond-set Franck Muller Geneve Conquistador King on the January 2005 cover of VIBE. "It's something that's exquisite enough to talk about." Or maybe even rap about. *Justin Monroe*

BIG-TIMER

What SWIZZ BEATZ uses when he's on the clock.

Back in '98, I saw this lawyer wearing a great watch. Since I didn't know what it was, I asked, and he put me on, like, "You need to give Rolex a break and get with Franck Muller." That was before I really started making money, so when I found one costing $25,000, I thought, I'm never getting that. Then things changed, and I got my first one, probably at the end of '99. I owned six of them. I still have a colorful collector's edition Crazy Hour Color Dreams. I like the bugged-out shape of their faces and the comfort. Plus, whether iced out, stainless steel, or regular with a leather band, they go with everything from business suits to sweats. *As told to J.M.*

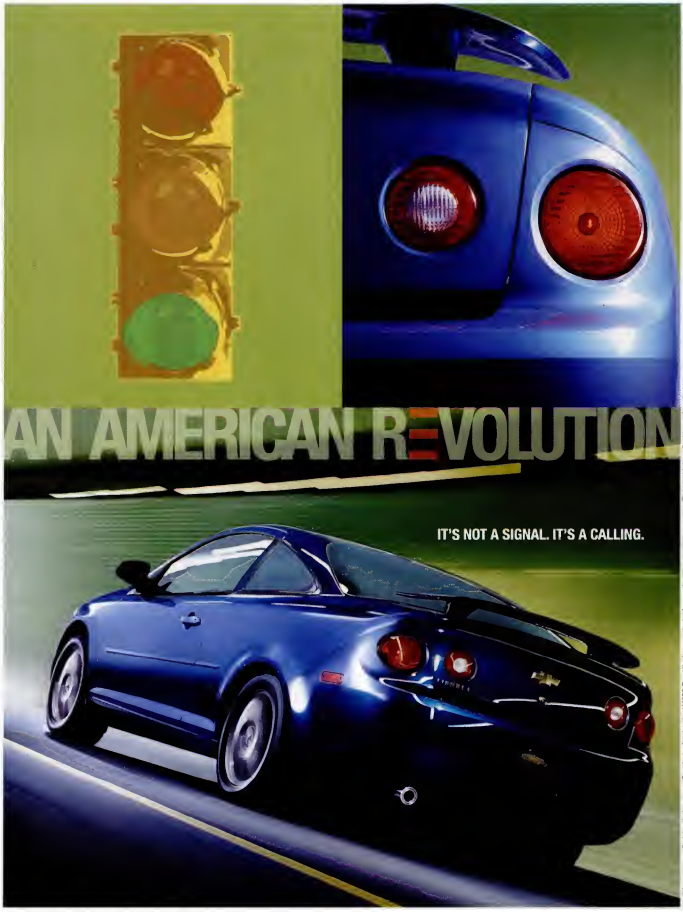


SWIZZ MOVEMENT: He's watching you.

ROCK SOLID If watching the watch is more than just your thing (like, say, you might be addicted to rocks), don't miss *Bling Bling: Hip-Hop's Crown Jewels*, the new photo-filled tome by VIBE contributor and pop-culture commentator Minya Oh (aka Miss Info). Shining more light on rap's jewels than a Hype Williams video, *Bling Bling* examines everyone from Slick Rick's to P. Diddy's fascination with flash. Ludacris handles the introduction. ($28; Wenner Books)



BEATZ: JOHNNY NUNEZ/WIREIMAGE



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Droppin' Dime

VIBE's guide to the **10 THINGS** you need to know about this month.

1
DIRECTV'S NFL SUNDAY TICKET SUPERFAN.
Are you really ready for some football? This season, DirecTV lets you watch up to eight games simultaneously. Start fantasizing about Week One now. ($338; *directv.com*)



2
NOKIA 8801.
A stainless-steel, slider-style cell that's all about class. (over $500; *nokia.com*)

3
WE CLOTHING.
This Swedish company has already conquered the hipster crowd with its simple, colorful style, but with skirts, hoodies, eye patches, jackets, and a collaboration sneaker with Adidas, it has something for everybody. (*wesc.com*)





4
ASOMBROSO TEQUILA.
Check out this new ultrapremium brand for a shot that actually goes down smooth. ($58 to $250; *asombroso tequila.com*)

5
MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE.
Bomb trains, kick ass, and take names in Marc Ecko's new game. (PS2, $50; *atari.com/gettingup*)

6


JB1 CAMERA.
Straight outta 007's stash, this tiny digital camera, disguised as a brushed metal Zippo lighter, lets you snap stealth pictures and record videos and voices without blowing your cover. ($100; *jbcamera.com*)

7
PLUSDECK2.
Turn those classic cassette mixes into MP3s before the tape pops. ($150; *plus deck.com*)

8
DEF JAM, INC.
"One day, [Slick Rick] walked into the Elizabeth Street office and after being unable to get the staff's attention, he took out a pistol and fired three shots into the ceiling yelling: 'Attention, peasants!'"—one of countless arresting incidents found in Stacy Guerasevа's history of "The Logo." ($24; One World/Ballantine Books)



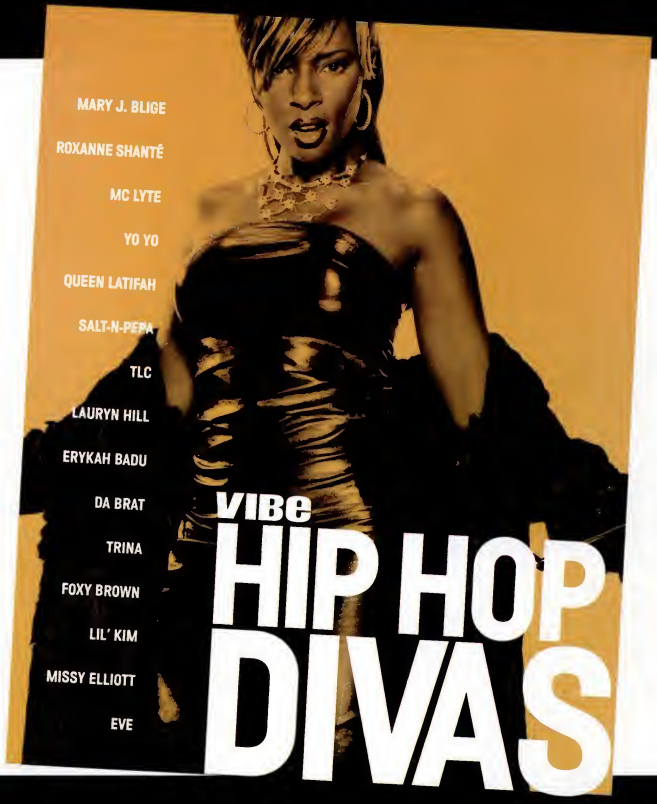
9
CADILLAC BICYCLES.
($500 to $1,900; *cadillacbicycles.com*)



10
MOTOROLA HT820 BLUETOOTH STEREO HEADSET.
Listen to music or talk on your cell anywhere in your crib with these wireless headphones. The music even pauses when the phone rings, so you won't miss that call from your mom. (price TBA; *hellomoto.com*)



DO THE LADIES RUN THIS MUTHA...?



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SPARKLY WHITES: Blind 'em with your smile.

I'm thinking about getting an iced-out grill. What should I know about maintenance? Can it damage my real teeth?

Shining Bite
Jackson, Miss.

As a longtime gold-teeth wearer, I applaud your fashion sense! But if you're gonna do it, you gotta do it right. Cutting corners with anything less than 18-karat white or yellow gold (or platinum for the big-timers) can leave you with grayish stains on your chompers. You also have to decide if you want removable caps, like mine, or permanent caps glued to your teeth, like Baby's. "I always recommend the removable ones," says Paul Wall, who not only wears grills but makes them as well. "Diamonds get dirty too fast on permanents." To keep your icy jibs gleaming, Wall says, "Clean 'em like any other piece of jewelry. Use a soft toothbrush and running water, then polish them with a jewelry buff rag." Finally, it's still a good idea to get a professional whitening treatment, like BriteSmile, every two to three years just to make sure your natural pearls will always shine.

I cut loose at the office by instant messaging my friends and my girl. Can my company monitor my IM conversations?

Holla
Philadelphia, Pa.

Hell yeah! But will raunchy IMs to wifey get you fired? Probably not. If you're spilling corporate secrets, though, that may be a problem. "Lots of programs let companies see what's on your office computer screen," says Gene A. Reich Jr., a private computer consultant. "And a lot of big companies even hire someone just to read outgoing employee e-mails." If you really want to keep your chats quiet, try using a mobile device that offers an instant message feature, like the T-Mobile Sidekick II. Your buddies won't know the difference.

Besides a regular savings account, what can I do to make sure my bread cakes?

Paper Soldier
Seattle, Wash.

First off, it pays to be wise. "I constantly have to talk my clients out of investing in exciting but dangerous projects," says Arty Erk of Wlodinguer, Erk & Chanzis, financial adviser to Joe, Mobb Deep, Memphis Bleek, and others. "If you have the money, first buy a place to live in. That's equity. Without equity, it can be hard to even get credit cards." If your ends don't stretch quite that far, Erk suggests investing in an Internet fund, like the Munder Fund, or a global growth mutual fund, which is riskier than a treasury bond but worth it for young investors who don't have a family. It may not be fast money, but years later, you'll be paid in full.

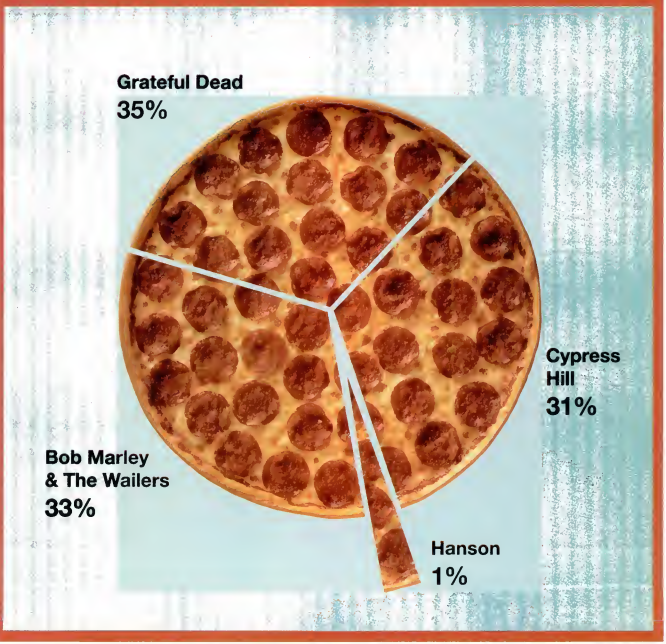
MAMA SAID: "Don't envy." By Ciara

When I was little, my mom told me never to be a jealous person because it's not necessary to want what others have. One day something emotional happened to me in school, and when I came home, she really made it clear, saying, "Jealousy will get you nowhere." Once I thought about what she said, it all made sense. People try to fill your mind with negative thoughts and make you sink deeper. And since I'm an artist, people want me to be competitive, but it's not about that for me. My mom's advice has carried me a long way. Without that, it probably would have taken me longer to learn that jealousy only makes you miserable. I guess you could say she was trying to protect me and instill some morals. So I always remember that what's meant for you to have, you will have.



Illustration by **PAUL OAKLEY**

Chance of getting the munchies at 3 AM while listening to:



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THE BAY

SCENE Northern California's Bay Area—which includes San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, San Jose, and Vallejo—is known for setting trends.

PILLOW TALK According to [illegible] ALTONATION' MAKAMURA, the best place to rest your head is SF's **Phoenix Hotel** (below). "It's set up like an old motor lodge," says the Bay-based producer, best known for his work on the Dr. Octagon and Handsome Boy Modeling School projects. "There's a bar and swimming pool, and a lot of bands stay there. The neighborhood is kind of sketchy, but people are up all hours of the night, and on a pure entertainment level, it's high up there" (*jdv hospitality.com*).



Other tellys: SF's **Hotel des Arts** has a block of rooms individually bombed by graffiti artists like Shepard Fairey, Dalek, Sam Flores, and Doze Green (*sfhoteldesarts.com*). For the Silicon Valley set, the nightlife, shopping, and amenities at San Jose's boutique **Hotel Valencia** can't be beat (*hotelvalencia.com*).



CLUB HOPPING The Bay is brimming with nightlife, but Oakland's GRAPEFLE recommends E-40's **Ambassador's Lounge** (above). "I went there for E-40's birthday," says the neo-soul singer, whose new album, *Change It All*, is out now. "It's in San Jose, but it definitely has an Oakland vibe. It's a young 'hyphy' thing."

Other spots to post up: The San Francisco DJ spot the **Milk Bar** is a low-key favorite among hip hop heads (*milksf.com*). While Oakland's **Yoshi's at Jack London Square** serves as a West Coast jazz mecca, attracting names like Roy Ayers and Branford Marsalis to its intimate club and adjoining Japanese restaurant (*yoshis.com*).

GRUB The Bay is home to a variety of folks cooking up a variety of foods, but when professional skateboarder MARCUS MCBRIDE has hunger pangs, he slides into a booth at Frisco's hip **Osha Thai Noodle Café** (below; *oshathai.com*). "There's something about the food that tastes supergood," says the longtime Bay representative, who currently rides for Stevie Williams's DGK Skateboards. "It's the best Thai food I've ever had." And that's coming from a world traveler. **Also on the menu:** For innovative takes on Vietnamese food, dip into SF's the **Slanted Door** (*slanteddoor.com*) or Oakland's **Le Cheval Restaurant** (*lecheval.com*). Or head to Yountville to experience one of the world's best restaurants: Chef Thomas Keller's award-winning brainchild the **French Laundry** (*french laundry.com*). The nouveau Californian cuisine may cost a grip, but it will change your perception of food forever.





FINE TUNES When it comes to diggin' in the crates, graffiti artist Doze Green recommends San Francisco's **Groove Merchant Records.** "I'm a victim of vinyl-itis," says the influential artist. "The owner, 'Cool' Chris Veltri, has the finger-lickin' pickins. From break beat and rare groove to '60s funk and jazz breaks and Brazilian hip hop, he's got the stuff." (*Howard Lamarr*).

More flava in ya ear: The vast acreage at SF and [illegible] **Amoeba Music** (above) allows [illegible] vinyl selection (*amoeba [illegible]*). [illegible] more diminutive locale, the staff at the Mission District's **Aquarius Records** [illegible] obscure Ethiopian folk (*aquarius [illegible]*).

Todd Inoue

GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE: PHIL CONANT/SAN FRANCISCO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



HIGH FASHION The cool kids on it here.

ART-I-FACTS San Francisco's UPPER PLAYGROUND has what you need.

When it comes to slangin' hot product in the Bay, BALCO ain't the only brand with juice. Located in the Lower Haight Street district, San Francisco clothing boutique and art gallery Upper Playground (*upperplayground.com*) has been making its mark since 1998, connecting the dots between the city's hip hop, skateboarding, and graffiti subcultures with eye-popping apparel that's long on style and short on intrusive branding. "If you look at our stuff, 60 to 65 percent doesn't have our name on it," says co-owner Adam Krohn. Instead, you'll find the names of the individual artists—often skateboard, album cover, and corporate-logo designers—behind many items, an approach that satisfies art and clothing collectors alike. So the next time you're in the Bay fiending for some custom-painted kicks or a David Choe–designed T-shirt, swing through Upper Playground. It's worth the trip. *T.I.*

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BUSINESS AS USUAL: Cohen is on top of his game.

LYOR COHEN

Warner Music Group's head checkwriter has more juice than OJ. Here's a taste of the man behind the name.



< Other executives on my level:
- Edgar Bronfman Jr.
- Jay-Z ("He's got a really incredible instinct.")
- Sandy Weill



> I don't leave home without:
- My mobile phone
- Family photos
- A knot ("My large stack of cash.")

< Keep these things out of the boardroom:
- Cryptic language
- Business clichés
- Unwillingness to challenge the system ("The system is in place, but you always got to check the rules to see if they apply.")



> Best places to catch a nap:
- Planes
- Trains
- Behind home plate at a Yankees game ("Even though I'm a Yankee fan.")





< I find new artists at:
- Canter's Delicatessen
- Backstage at a concert
- Outside the elevators at the Sony-BMG building ("Each place is strange for its own reasons.")

> I'll fire you for:
- Lack of respect for coworkers
- Sandbagging ("If you're not giving it your all.")
- Disrespecting the Warner team





< I need these wireless devices:
- BlackBerry with Bluetooth
- Remote control ("For TV, DVDs, and music.")
- Verizon Wireless LG VX8000 phone



> My desk would just be a big wooden box if not for:
- My ashtray
- Photos of my family
- Secret eject button ("I have that for unwanted visitors!")



< Three TV shows I'm always tuned into:
- CNN news
- HBO's *Deadwood* ("I think it's really well made.")
- Any sports program



< I want people to remember my:
- Kindness
- Sincerity
- Love ("It's intertwined with the other two I named.")



< Childhood hustles that taught me to work hard:
- Bagging groceries
- Party promoter ("It was fun and taught me about the business.")
- Golf caddy



< Winning my respect is easy with:
- Passion
- Commitment
- A willingness to be wrong ("If you play it safe and operate the brake, you end up stopping.")

Reporting by Chris Yuscavage

Comb: STEPHEN DANELIAN; DEADWOOD: DOUG HYUN


[Pink in the sink. When I saw it, I thought, I'm just brushing too hard. Then the dentist said a little bleeding is a sign of gingivitis. His advice: switch to Colgate Total®]
Only Colgate Total® protects against a full range of oral health problems for 12 hours. It forms a protective shield, so it reduces gingivitis by up to 88%. Which is why more dental professionals recommend it most often.
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Gingivitis
Stains
Plaque
Weak Enamel
Tartar
Plaque Build-Up
Cavities
Between Teeth
Colgate Total
#1
COMPLETE 12 HOUR PROTECTION

Get This

Why should girls have all the fun? Here are this season's BEST ACCESSORIES FOR GUYS.

GEAR



1. Burberry London yellow, green, white, and blue scarf ($375; 866-559-0499). **2. American Eagle Outfitters** striped hat ($18; ae.com). **3. Converse** Chuck Taylor All Star Hi ($40; converse.com). **4. D&G** brown leather gloves ($700; 212-965-8000). **5. Fossil** black-and-silver watch ($75; fossil.com). **6. Clarks** black suede wallabee ($110; clarksusa.com). **7. Burberry London** gray and yellow newsboy cap ($150; 866-559-0499). **8. Gucci** black sunglasses ($210; saksfifthavenue.com). **9. Salvatore Ferragamo** brown messenger bag ($750; 800-628-8910).



[SGT Shankia Bethel, 92Y Unit Supply Specialist, U.S. Army]

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MAIN INGREDIENT

EARTHY- AND METALLIC-colored accessories are the newest rage.

GEAR



CHARLOTTE DAVIS

1. Kate Spade metallic bag ($795; Neiman Marcus). **2. Helene Zubeldia** beaded necklace ($250; 323-939-2788). **3. Isaac Mizrahi for Ben-Amun** Lucite and metal bracelet ($250; 212-244-4480). **4. Alan Antonio Lopez** patent leather pumps ($585; Heels Chicago Shoe Salon, 312-235-0447). **5. Rafé** metallic wallet ($135; 800-555-4HOP). **6. Kenneth Cole New York** knee-high boots ($495; 800-KEN-COLE). **7. Bebe** cardigan ($69; 877-232-3777). **8. Rafé** green and suede grommet bag ($495; 800-555-4HOP). **9. Dior** Hippy sunglasses ($645; solsticestores.com). **10. D&G** iPod holder ($375; 877-70-DGUSA). **11. Dooney & Bourke** brown leather bag ($375; dooney.com).

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FALL IN LINE

GEAR Check out the **LATEST COLLECTIONS** from some innovative designers.



MEN

1. KENNETH COLE NEW YORK Keeping it traditional while adding a little edge has always been Kenneth Cole's forte. This time around, the color plum gave the collection its added spunk. These goodies were simply too tasty to deny.

2. KRIS VAN ASSCHE The first menswear collection from Kris Van Assche was stunning from top to bottom. Three-piece suits, tailored jackets, and low-slung pants strolled down the runway. It was urban, it was chic, and it was unstoppable.

3. GUCCI The classic brand kept it sleek and modern with trench coats, tweed suits, and eveningwear in a traditional color scheme. The look was luxe without being too flashy.

4. MICHAEL KORS Kors designs for the jet-setter. And his fall collection was all about the traveling man. With beautifully knitted scarves, full trousers, and tailored blazers, anyone could look great in these '40s-inspired styles.

WOMEN

1. SWEETFACE Jennifer Lopez can now add New York Fashion Week designer to her expansive list of credits. Her first runway show did not disappoint, and it was all about her. Diamonds, fur, and more diamonds! Get right, indeed.

2. VERSACE Versace has always been about opulence, but this season, Donatella Versace took it down a notch and left us with pure glam. With sexy gowns sans the obvious glitz, as well as form-fitting coats, Versace returned to its glory days.

3. YVES SAINT LAURENT RIVE GAUCHE Stefano Pilati was all about form and proportions when he presented this fall collection. Broad shoulders, high collars, and textured fabrics not only resurrected the YSL of the '80s, but they also left you longing for the good old days.

4. DOLCE & GABBANA This design duo spared nothing when it came to making this the most dramatic collection. Fur, minis, and to-the-knee skin boots transformed the runway into a sexy, fantasy-filled experience.

Rajni Lucienne Jacques

SWEETFACE; VERSACE; YSL; MARIA VALENTINO/MCV PHOTO

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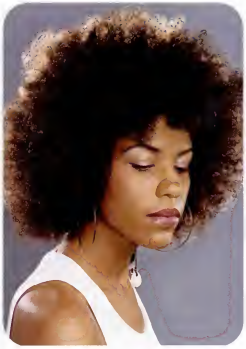
Please Drink Responsibly | The Christian Brothers Brandy, 40% Alc./Vol. CB Vineyards, Mira Loma, CA, Bardstown, KY © 2004

MAD STYLES

V BODY **WITH THEIR TWISTED DREADS, CURLY AFROS, AND INTRICATE DESIGNS,** these fashionable city dwellers will inspire you to try something new.



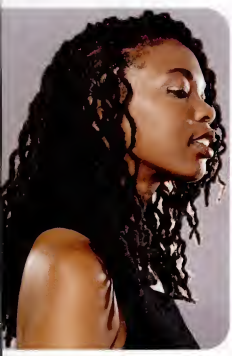
>Dread-Up



>Soul Sista



>Graffiti 'Do



>Rasta Love



>Twista



>Pretty Young Thing

HAIR BY DANA DIBBS FOR THE MONTGOMERY GROUP. GROOMING BY MARCUS "JEGGAE" SMITH FOR GILLETTE AT ART DEPARTMENT. MAKEUP BY AARON MITCHELL

Photographs by **ELLEN STAGG**

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ALL I NEED

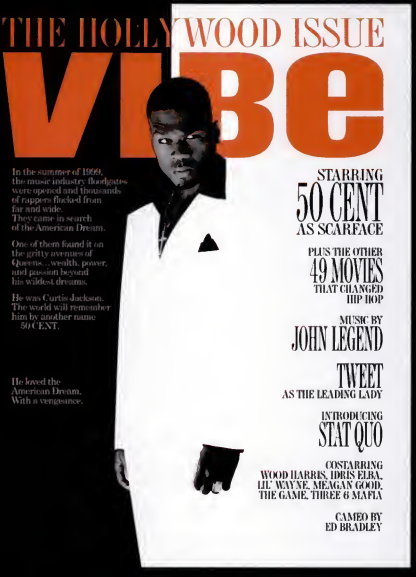
V FACE To keep looking your best, check out these **MUST-HAVE MAKEUP** picks.

1. Clinique Colour Surge Butter Shine lipstick in Cranberry Cream ($14; *clinique.com*).
2. Bobbi Brown Matte Stain clay ($20; *bobbibrown.com*).
3. Bourjois Paris Café & Crème eyeliner pencil ($10; *sephora.com*).
4. Lancôme Blush Subtil Delicate Oil-Free Powder Shimmer in Coral Sunset ($27; *lancome.com*).
5. Max Factor Lash Lift mascara in Rich Black ($7; drugstores).
6. Dior DiorShow Powder in Artistic Bronze 005 ($39; *sephora.com*).
7. M.A.C Lipglass in Mad Cap ($14; 800-387-6707).
8. Dior 5-Colour Eyeshadow in Romantic Chic ($50; *sephora.com*).
9. Lancôme Juicy Rouge in Sweet Whisper ($21; *lancome.com*).
10. NARS Duo Eyeshadow in Mediteranee ($20; *narscosmetics.com*).
11. M.A.C Blushcreme in Uncommon ($17; 800-387-6707).
12. Revlon Liquid Liner in Bronze Glitz ($18; drugstores).
13. Maybelline New York Expert Wear blush in Mocha Velvet ($6; drugstores).



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If you're the type of girl who constantly has to put up with haters—"She thinks she's cute!" "She ain't *that* fly"—you'll really give them something to be mad about when you cop this [illegible] purse. Hey, you can't help it if your style is a cut above the rest.
BY BEVERLY SMITH

HOW TO COMPLETE THE LOOK:
Rock the bag with a **Juicy Couture** [illegible] of corduroy-and-fur [illegible] of casual chic.

Step out with it wearing **Diane von Furstenberg's** [illegible] wrap dress in a rich dark brown or camel. You'll be *such* a lady.

It will look incredible with a cute [illegible] of **Mavi** [illegible], designed to show off your natural assets.

WHERE TO WEAR IT:
You must carry this bag to the Atlanta Football Classic at the Georgia Dome on September 24. This is more than a charity event, it's a place to be seen.

Look your best at the Monterey Jazz Festival September 16–18. Just picture the Crisp California air, chilled-out Jazz performances, and the knowledge that you're too sexy for all of it.

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Photographs by **PETER BERSON**



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PRE-FEST PARTIES

From East to West, the fest kicked off in style with these down-to-the-wire parties. VIBE thanks our event sponsors: New York at Up, Los Angeles at Conga Room and all the biggest urban music weekend of the year.

Special Thanks to: Nelly (courtesy of Derrick Jon Moore (Go Fireworks), Ryan Carey (Ryan Carey VOICE Media), Lisa and Steve Rogers, Melissa E. Cox, TJ Chapman, TJ Lo and DJ Kenny "Kenny Laurent" Gill of Gotham Artist Inc.)

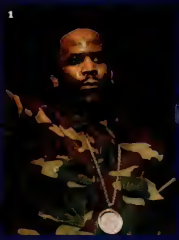








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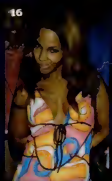
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2 NIGHTS TO PARTY

The Fest concert nights were loaded with the chart-topping artists that kept the crowd on its feet. (1) Outkast's Big Boi was one of the hometown heroes. (2) Steve Marley took us from Atlanta to "Jamaica, Jamaica." (3) Common told us to just *BE*. (4) Moet & Hennessy USA added to the VIP factor at the Georgia Dome. (5) (L.-r.) Tiaka Hurst, national promotions director, BK UniWorld; Kainon Jasper, Brand Seven Marketing; Melvin Young, VP communications, UniWorld Group. (6) (L.-r.) Sybil Chester, Moet & Hennessy USA; Robert L. Miller, CEO, Miller Publishing; Kenard Gibbs, president, VIBE; Jeff Mazzacano, corporate accounts manager, VIBE. (7) Kanye West shows off his diamonds to Rene Matthew, winner of the Dark and Lovely Color Flash Sweepstakes. (8) Singing it her way—one of the winners of Burger King's onstage contests. (9) Tarik Cox, account supervisor, Ford Division, UniWorld Group Inc. and Funkmaster Flex share a moment with Amerie. (10) Bad Boy's boy band BS with Lyfe Jennings. (11) Pay Attention!! The Aphilliates (l.-r.) Don Cannon, DJ Drama, and DJ Sense. (12) Rene and family, Sally Matthew, Ellis Matthew, and Ellis Matthew, Jr., enjoy the show from their VIP seats. (13) (L.-r.) Ryan Glover, RyanKenny; Kenny Burns, RyanKenny; and Abe Woosen, VP Atlanta, at one of our official after parties.

(14) Our guests had a great view of the show in the Burger King VIP suite at the Georgia Dome's End Zone. (15) Damien Jr. Gong Marley and Faith Evans. (16) Show host Free as she heads for the stage. (17) Our Fest performers received hot items in our gift bags from the likes of Moet & Hennessy USA and Ekllectik Clothing. (18) Seven gets the best view in the house thanks to dad Andre 3000. (19) Funny man, Tommy Davidson. (20) Doug E. Fresh (21) The ladies of Atlanta represent the Roc and their sorority.

21



MAYOR'S RECEPTION

The Honorable Shirley Franklin and friends helped us kick of the weekend with her Mayor's Reception at The Globe in the heart of downtown Atlanta. Special thanks to **Rio Negro** for setting the mood at our reception. Kenard Gibbs; the Honorable Mayor Shirley Franklin; Commissioner Craig Lesser, Dept. of Economic Development, State of Georgia; Meg LaVigne, VP and GM, UPN Atlanta; Marc Perry, account mananger, UniWorld Group, Ford. Tracie Howard, curator, Ethos.







HOST COMMITTEE

A special shout-out to James Andrews, choir; Marvin Arrington, Jr., Susan Bass, Lee Blevins, Maurice Bostick, Keith Brown, Ian Burke, Kenny Burns, Kandi Burress, Bryan Calhoun, Michael Caldwell, Ryan Cameron, Jason "J" Carter, Eugene Duffy, Demmette Guidry, Tanya Forrest Hall, George J. Hickman, Marco "Blue" Johnson, Rafer Johnson, Parrish Johnson, Jamahl King, Bruce Kirton, J. Leitt, Esq., Sheryl Merritt, Jason Orr, Will Packer, LaToya Patterson, Ronda Penrice, Dr. K. Sedonna Reed, Gil Robertson, Ina Saulberry, Leon Stoltz, Valerie Taylor, DJ Trauma, Derek "DL" Warfield, Rico Washington, Rocky Williform, and Chaka Zulu. Special thanks to **Esthan Johnson**.

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FREE AGENT CONTEST

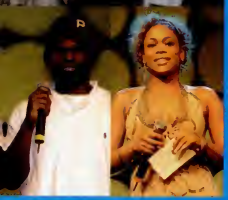
VIBE was excited to host our first Free Agent Contest at the Fest. Twelve of the best-unsigned artists from across the U.S. competed to win the top prize and appear live onstage at the Georgia Dome to open up our Saturday night show. It was Atlanta native **KALENNA** who won the respect of the judges and the heart of the crowd and came out a winner.

Kalenna is a songwriter/singer who has collaborated with artists on labels such as Bad Boy and Roc-A-Fella. She got much exposure from her response remix to Usher's "Confessions Pt. 2" and, now even more attention as she raced from the stage at the Georgia World Congress Center and wowed the crowd at the Georgia Dome like a true pro. For more information on Kalenna, visit www.kalenna.com or www.moodswingproductions.com. Expect to hear a lot more from Kalenna in the future.

Special thanks to **Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins** who hosted the Free Agent contest with our own associate music editor, **Rondell Conway**. The judges: (l-r,) Shakir Stewart, national director, A&R Def Jam Recordings; Funkmaster Flex; singer LaToya London; and Benjamin Meadows-Ingram, lifestyles editor, VIBE.

















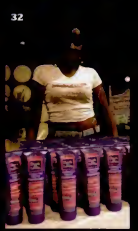













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2 DAYS TO PLAY

The VIBE MUSICFEST presented by BURGER KING kept the days action-packed as we presented the Fest Expo at the Georgia World Congress Center. (22) Sope Aluko, multicultural marketing manager, Burger King Corporation (center) with 112. (23) Lyfe Jennings; Keyshia Cole; Mimi Valdés, editor-in-chief, VIBE; Ayana Byrd, editor-at-large, VIBE VIXEN; Sope Aloku; and Kenard Gibbs in the Burger King Lounge. (24) Fest attendees test their luck for great Burger King prizes. (25) (L.-r.): Melvin Young; Dawn Pierce, regional account supervisor, UniWorld Group; Arlene Pitterson, account executive, UniWorld Group; Tiaka Hurst; Jamal Ali, senior group account director, UniWorld Group; Chad Crawford, manager, sales & marketing southeast region, Burger King Corporation. (26) Center: Jamal Ali and Chad Crawford with the BK beauties. (27) Monica and Kandi Buress come out to support. (28) Rene hangs like a celebrity with Ciara. (29) (l.-r.) Rene with Jaqie Tarrant, SoftSheen-Carson, director of education; D'Lonzo, and Johnny Wright with the SoftSheen-Carson Style Squad. (30) Expo attendee gets her look with Color Flash hair stylist. (31) Getting a shape up at the SoftSheen-Carson booth. (32) Hair and product consultation at the Dark and Lovely Color Flash booth.

(33) Spa Parties created a relaxing atmosphere. (34) SoftSheen-Carson team: Antoinette Priolo, production manager; Dina Dickson, marketing assistant; Yolanda Payne, senior marketing manager; Jaqie Tarrant; Rene Matthew; Johnny Wright; Maya Brown, marketing manager, Tiffany Mayo, assistant marketing manager; Nicole Vassell, marketing assistant; and Andrew Covington, territory sales manager. (35) James Malone (second from right), group account director, UniWorld Group Inc. Ford Division account; Steve Ewing (far left), president of Atlanta's Wade Ford dealership; Funkmaster Flex (second from left); and Kenard Gibbs stand in style alongside the Ford Mustang at the Ford booth. (36) Budweiser celebrated the True Music of Atlanta at the Fest. (37-38) Event attendees relax and enjoy a minute in the VH1 Lounge. (39) Danielle Driscoll and Brian Loiselle have the hot new DVD *Street Ball Confidential Volume I*, featuring NBA All-Star Baron Davis, street-ball legend "Headache" and the Game. On sale now from Echo Bridge Entertainment.

OUTDOOR NEXT STAGE

You heard some of the best new music at the artist showcase stage during the Fest. From hip hop to R&B, soul to gospel, the Next Stage had a lot of everything for everyone. Special shout-outs to our NEXT Stage performers:

Aphilliates DJ Drama, DJ Sense, and DJ Don Cannon
Killer Mike
Crime Mob
D4L
Mac Breez-y
Konkrete
Bohagon
Stat Quo
Maceo
Da Bacwudz
Jovan
Wild Sty'lion
Jay Ellis
The Replacementz
Attitude
Willie The Kid
Jody Breeze
Tango Red
Dirty Rose
Darome Bently
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Glenn Jones
Lizz Fields
Algebra
(In order of appearance)

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SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

Be on the lookout for more information on the 2006 **VIBE MUSICFEST presented by BURGER KING** at **www.vibe.com.**

GET A FEST T-SHIRT

Whether you were there or want to floss like you were, go to www.vibe.com and get your commemorative **VIBE MUSICFEST presented by BURGER KING** T-shirt and rock the neighborhood with style.

V-PANELS

Not only did the Fest entertain, but it also educated and enlightened our guests with V-BIZ—our two days of panels. (40) The honorable Reverend Al Sharpton blessed V-Biz with his words and presence on the Ethics in Entertainment panel moderated by author Cheo Coker. (41) Ladies First: The VIBE VIXEN Panelist: actress/activist Sheryl Lee Ralph; Donna DeBerry, CEO/founder, DRP International; Jeanine Griffin, VP/GM MBK Entertainment; Mimi Valdés; Johnnie Walker, president, NABFEME; Ayana Byrd; Lisa Bonner, Esq., founder, Bonner Law. (42) The crew from The Bishop Eddie Long's RE:Present keep it street and keep the faith. (43) Our V-Biz Panelists schooled the crowd on how to get in the game: Kenard Gibbs; manager Chaka Zulu; songwriter Kandi Burress; business manager Jini Thornton; producer Kwamé; Universal Records' Eric Nicks; Kedar Massenberg, CEO, Kedar Entertainment; Erik Parker, music editor, VIBE. (44) VIBE editor-at-large, OJ Lima (rear) at our V-Books signing with (l.-r.) Teri Woods, Malaika Adero, Emily Raboteau, and Zane. **Rainforest/Screen Gems** presented our Stellar Gospel Showcase with a sneak preview of the film, *The Gospel.* (45) *The Gospel* Choir, (46) Praise Dancers, and (47) Gospel legends Yolanda Adams and Fred Hammond lifted the crowd with their performances. (48) BET personality, Jeff Johnson has an introspective moment during the V-Biz Panel. (49) Actress Elise Neal (*Hustle & Flow*) on the V-Hollywood Panel moderated by Serena Kim, VIBE features editor. It wouldn't be a VIBE experience without fashion. Dozens of Atlanta's best models rocked the V-Style runaway in the hottest clothes and accessories styled by Sybil Pennix. Here are some of our supermodels: (49) Dorien Agyapon; (50 & 52) Dawnisha Halfkenny; and (51) Akilah Smith. Special thanks to **Bovanti (www.bovanti.com)** for make-up; **ShoeMakers' Warehouse (404-881-9301)** for ladies' dress shoes; **Safilo, USA** for eyewear; **PF Flyers** for sneakers. Hair styled by **SoftSheen-Carson.** PHOTO CREDITS: Noel St. John, Ray Tamarra, and Courtesy of SoftSheen-Carson.

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YUMMY BINGHAM **Back on the Block**

They say you can take the girl out of the ghetto, but not the ghetto out of the girl. Well, maybe that's because the girl keeps leaving her plush confines in suburban New Jersey to visit the tough-as-nails Jamaica, Queens, neighborhood that's the inspiration for her infectious brand of hip hop-tinged R&B. "I learned a whole lot here," explains 19-year-old Yummy Bingham (née Elizabeth Wyce). "The style and culture was appealing, and hip hop was around me 24/7."

Riding in the backseat of a luxury town car, Yummy (a nickname she got from her grandfather) points out some personal landmarks in the 'hood she still calls home. There's the hair salon, the Mickey D's, and her grandfather's storefront church, where Yummy spent a great deal of her admittedly rebellious childhood before embarking on a once-deferred singing career.

Encouraged by her dad, Dinky Bingham, a producer who worked with Guy (Aaron Hall is her godfather), Yummy cut her first demo at the age of 12. In 2000, Naughty By Nature's Kay Gee tapped her to be the centerpiece of the all-girl threesome Tha' Rayne. After they backed up Jaheim on his 2002 hit "Fabulous," label politics curtailed the group's album release, which eventually led to their disbanding. Yummy kept grinding, however—guesting on De La Soul's "Much More" and Talib Kweli's "Black Girl Pain" in 2004. That same year, she formed the production company Muzik Park with fellow Queens native (and family friend) Rockwilder; a deal with Motown/Universal soon followed. "It's funny how you know somebody for so long and life permits things to come full circle," says Rockwilder about his relationship with the singer he's known since she was 6 years old. "Yummy's vocals and songwriting put her in a class by herself. I'm just happy to be working with her."

And their chemistry is evident on Yummy's sweet but street debut, *The First Seed*. While the brooding "Come Get It," featuring Jadakiss, is sure to boom in the big-boy trucks, the spirited radio favorite "Is It Good to You" is an irresistible anthem for the ladies. Yummy credits her beloved Queens for inspiring much of her creativity. "I couldn't ask for a better place to grow up," she gushes as her ride heads for Manhattan. "It's my home, it's what I love." The ghetto has been good to her.

Amy Linden

Photograph by **MARK LIDDELL**



"YOU EITHER THRIVE OR FLOP UNDER PRESSURE. I THRIVE."

RIHANNA

Caribbean Queen

Rihanna's torso looks like it's going to snap as she imitates Shakira's cobra-like belly moves here at the Loft Recording Studios in Bronxville, N.Y. "I work with [choreographer] Fatima Robinson," says the 17-year-old singer, born Robyn Rihanna Fenty in the parish of Saint Michael in Barbados. Indeed, anyone who's seen Rihanna's color-splashed video for "Pon De Replay"—which resuscitates the Diwali *riddim*—would say Aaliyah's famed instructor did a superb job with Def Jam's debutante.

But it was Rihanna's voice, not her dancing, that dazzled the label's buttoned-up execs (particularly Jay-Z) during her audition earlier this year. "I was shaking," she says in her charming Bajan accent. "But you either thrive or flop under pressure. I thrive." Clearly, if Jay-Z insists on inking a deal hours after your audition, you've thrived.

Even after Rihanna performed at a Caribbean beauty pageant in 2001 and won her school's talent show last year, some, including her mother, Monica, had doubts. "In the Caribbean, we aim to be doctors or lawyers," says Rihanna. "My mother [an accountant] used to ask me what I wanted to be, and I would reply, Entertainer. She'd give me this look. But now she's proud of me because I stuck to my dream."

Rihanna's manicured hands and scarred legs ("I used to climb trees and throw pebbles at ducks") offer a kind of analogy to her fusion of R&B and raw West Indian sounds. Overseen by pop producers Carl Sturken and Evan Rogers (Christina Aguilera, Kelly Clarkson), her debut, *Music of the Sun*, ranges from a remake of Dawn Penn's reggae classic "You Don't Love Me (No, No, No)" to the soulful, acoustic guitar–driven ballad "The Last Time." The only constant is Rihanna's fluid, Beyoncé-like inflections. "Rihanna's music is in her blood," affirms Kardinal Offishall, a guest on the album. "She sounds natural, not contrived, and that's something special that needs to be exposed."

And Rihanna is excited about taking her authentic sound worldwide. "It's so amazing to come from a small Caribbean island and blow up internationally," she says as silver bangles jingle on her wrists. "This was always my dream, and now that it has come true, I'm ready for anything that comes with it." Snakelike belly moves and all.

Angie Romero

Photograph by MARK MANN

Who would have thought a tampon could get me to that Zen place?

I'm glad I didn't have to skip class. 'Cause, for me, yoga and pads just don't mix. Inhale. At least the whole class can breathe deeply now, without me getting self-conscious. Whoa, the blood's rushing to my head. How long do we have to hold this? Exhale and focus. I am centered and totally relaxed.



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RAY CASH **Ohio Player**

There comes a time when every man has to put up or shut up. Rapper Ray Cash is at that point. "People always ask, 'What the fuck is in Cleveland?' But I'm about to show them," Cash says as he strolls into the city's music hub, Nikky's, for a meet-and-greet with fans. "My music is going to make enough noise to bring some attention back to Cleveland." Furthermore, the 25-year-old local celebrity insists, he's not bringing the thuggish ruggish stuff you're used to hearing from the Buckeye State. "I got all the respect in the world for Bone, but we're passed that. We've got something different going on."

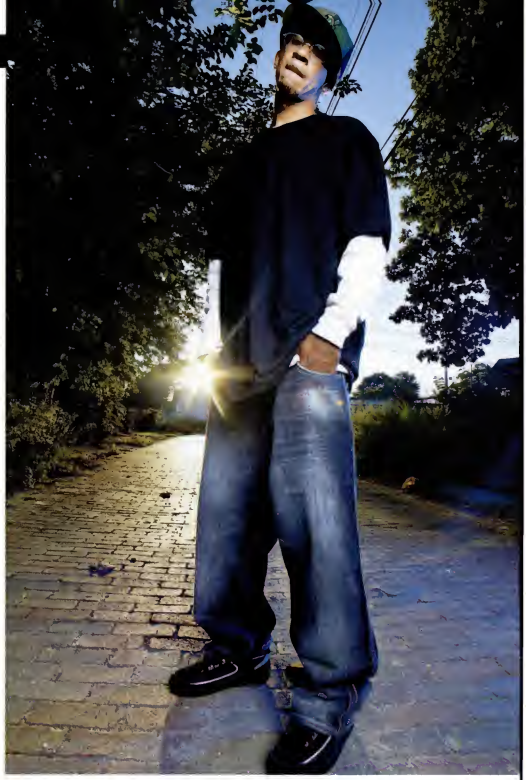
Dubbed Ray Cash because of his love for the dough, Wardell Ray Cheeks grew up in Cleveland's Cliffview Gardens housing project, where he idolized a diverse set of hip hop luminaries. "I came up listening to the Notorious B.I.G., UGK, 8Ball & MJG, and Nas," he says. "I get my style from them." That would explain why, as a teenager, Cash kept his simple, straightforward rhyme pattern under wraps during the fast-spitting, sing-songy, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony era. "A lot of people tried to sound like Bone instead of coming out with their own niche," he says. "That wasn't me."

By 2001, his hometown's relevance in hip hop had faded to practically zero. That's when a determined Cash stepped up. Under the tutelage of comanagers Kevin Buruss and Shaleek Berry, the green MC went from making amateurish demos to seasoned material that was good enough to impress Sony Urban Music A&R Kawan "KP" Prather. Credited with launching T.I.'s career, Prather offered Cash a deal with Columbia Records in March 2004.

His eclectic debut, *C.O.D.: Cash on Delivery*, stretches across regions with its catchy beats and bright lyricism. From the street-stomping, screw-influenced "P.A.N.," featuring Bun B, to the East Coast-tinged "Fiends, Fiends, Fiends" to the dirty South trunk rattler "Bumpin My Music," featuring T.I., and the Midwest-style pimpish lead single "Sex Appeal," Cash is sure to redeem his promise to change the perception of local hip hop. "The world is ready for a new sound out of Cleveland," agrees radio jock Eddie Bauer. "Ray's about to show everyone the evolution of MCs coming out of this area."

"I used to bullshit with rap," Cash says as he signs headshots for his growing number of fans. Then, with a cool air of confidence, he adds, "Now I've got the weight of the city on my back." That's a responsibility not to be taken lightly.

Alvin Blanco



"MY MUSIC IS GOING TO BRING SOME ATTENTION BACK TO CLEVELAND."

Photograph by **CHRISTIAN LANTRY**

NEW!

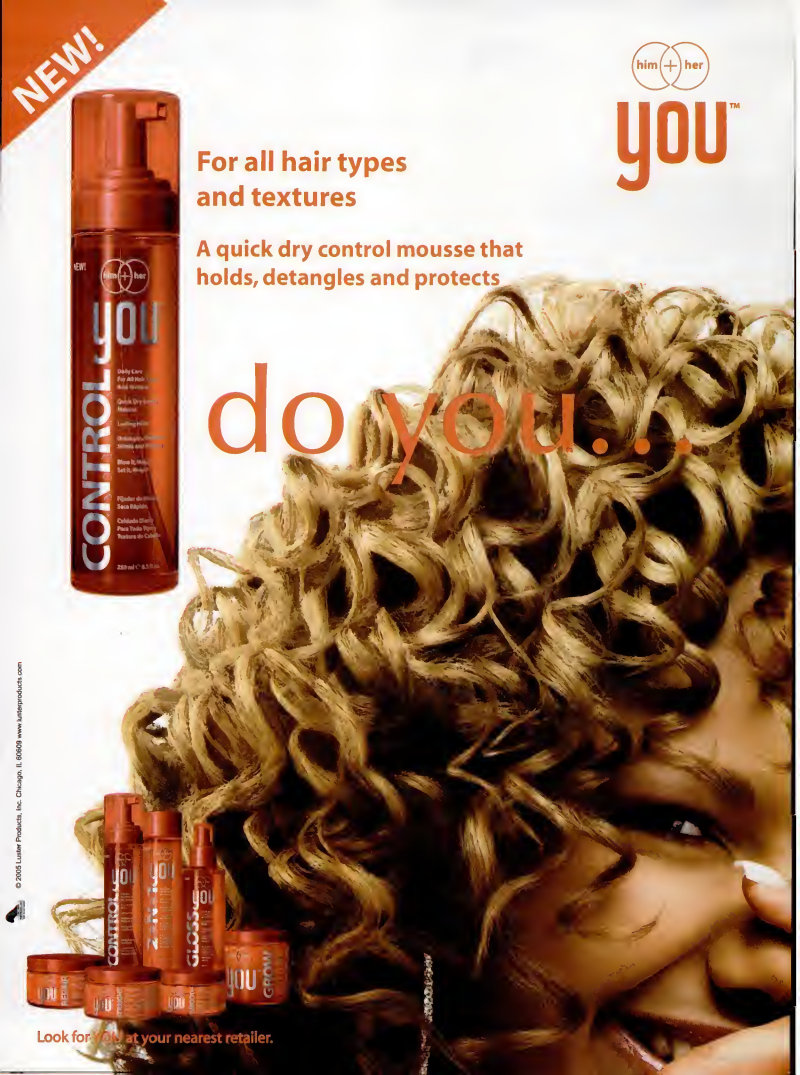
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"THIS IS GOD'S PLAN, I'M JUST STICKING TO THE SCRIPT."

NOAH

God's Son

Noah can barely stomach watching Miami Heat wunderkind Dwyane Wade run circles around his beloved Detroit Pistons in Game 5 of the playoffs. The 22-year-old MC has turned his back on the television inside Atlanta's Hot Beats recording studio, prepared to accept defeat. "Maybe it's not our year," he says. "I guess someone else deserves to win."

Coming up short on victory is nothing new to Noah, who's seen his share of ups and downs during his musical odyssey. Now, after one false start and a steady grind in obscurity, he's putting his future in the hands of a higher being. "I walked through situations in the past with no knowledge of the game," says Noah. "But this is God's plan, so I'm just sticking to the script."

Growing up around the influences of a jazz-piano-playing father and soul-singing mother, Noah M. Stephens IV naturally gravitated toward music, writing his first rhymes at the age of 10. Born in California but raised in Detroit's Schoolcraft section, Noah drew from diverse sources to develop his uncanny style. "I'm from everywhere, so my twang is just something different," he says. And after moving to Atlanta in 1994, Noah began to stand out on the local scene with a style that was part East Coast braggadocio, a bit of offhand Southern cool, and mostly charismatic appeal.

Looking to catch his first break in 1998, he competed on the MTV talent-elimination show *The Cut*. Though impressive, he left the Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes–hosted competition with a disappointing second-place finish. Nevertheless, a record deal with the renowned Suave House Records followed in 1999. Unfortunately, the label lost its distribution deal, which forced Noah onto the rap unemployment line. But a chance encounter with producer Deric "D-Dot" Angelettie in 2003 at Jay-Z's 40/40 Club lead to a second coming. By early 2005, Angelettie helped broker a deal with Jive to release Noah's debut, *The Music Man*. And to hear him tell it, Noah's something like a phenomenon. "I've done records with the great ones—Eminem, Jay-Z, and the Notorious B.I.G.—and I'll put Noah in the category with them all," Angelettie says.

And just like the Detroit Pistons, who were able to bounce back from tonight's crushing Game 5 defeat (winning the Eastern Conference Finals in seven games), Noah is certain that the current appeal for his bouncy, trunk-rattling single, "Dat Boy Chevy," marks a new beginning. "From losing, I've learned how to win," he says. "Now that I'm on the rebound, I'm just trying to continue what was never finished."

Maurice G. Garland

STYLING BY MIKE BOGARD AT BLVNG GROUP; GROOMING BY CLAUDIA LAKE AT THE MONTGOMERY GROUP. TRACK JACKET BY LRG; HAT BY CYPLUS HEADWEAR

Photograph by WWW.RICHDIRECTION.NET

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JUICE

09 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74 73 72 71 70 69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60 59 58 57 56 55 54 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

AS GOOD FOR YOU AS V8, AND AS DELICIOUS AS OJ. PRESENTING... VIBE'S ANNUAL GUIDE TO THE FLYEST PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS OUT THERE.

Back in the day, *juice* used to mean weight and influence. As Lil' Kim said, it's "money, power, respect." But as hip hop matures, juice has come to mean something more subtle and less Machiavellian. It can also be about philanthropic contributions to humanity, degree of downtown cool, or pure pop culture domination. We've chosen the most influential artists, actors, athletes, writers, industry people, brands, and toys (among many others) that have the juiciest juice.

So to drive home this message in its most mouthwatering form, we're doing something we've never done before—ranking the juice list, brutally assessing degrees of impact. You won't waste time reading about the same old household names you already know; many just get listed. Instead, we've tried to put more shine on lesser-known individuals and bubbling ideas you may want to learn more about. All of our juicees have been assigned symbols that represent why they belong on the list. For example, a boom box represents legendary status; a slate represents a Hollywood heavyweight. Prepare yourself for some real surprises. Get to sippin'!

Hip-Hop Theater Festival 100
Cool & Dre 99
Can't Stop Won't Stop 98
Anguilla 97
C. Vivian Stringer 96



Hip-Hop Theater Festival founder Danny Hoch (left) with Clyde Valentin and Kamilah Forbes.

LIVE ONSTAGE

HIP-HOP THEATER FESTIVAL BRINGS THE DRAMA TO THE NATIONAL STAGE.

The young, multicultural audience sits captivated. One woman wipes tears from her eyes. A teenage boy sits on the edge of his seat, eyes wide like he's seeing something for the first time. And he is: an electric combination of live plays, but from an activist, hip hop perspective.

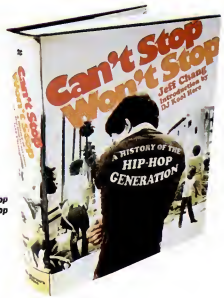
Celebrating its fifth anniversary, the Hip-Hop Theater Festival is stomping down doors in the white theater world with its powerful multidisciplinary performances and commitment to introducing young hip hop heads to drama. With successful runs in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and San Francisco, the festival is bringing back the art of storytelling with a message. What started as an arena for a few folks in New York (including Danny Hoch and Sarah Jones) to create a buzz—and cultural change—turned quickly into standing ovations, critical acclaim, and a nationwide movement of performers and playwrights unapologetically pushing the boundaries of both hip hop and theater arts with humor, eloquence, and an underdog spirit. "When we started, we were like, Yo, how's this thing gonna carry itself?" recalls HHTF executive director Clyde Valentin. "Then we wondered, Is this gonna last? And now it's bigger than I ever thought it could be." *Laura Checkoway*

COOL & DRE They produced some of '04's greatest hits (including the Game's "Hate It or Love It"), scored *NBA Live 2005* and *2006*, and landed a $2 million label deal with Jive.

CAN'T STOP WON'T STOP: A HISTORY OF THE HIP-HOP GENERATION When Hip Hop 101 becomes a requirement, Jeff Chang's history of the turmoil that begat this beloved culture will be the go-to textbook.

ANGUILLA It's the beachy Caribbean island where Nelly, Ashanti, Jay-Z, and Beyoncé canoodle, catch rays, and sip piña coladas.

C. VIVIAN STRINGER The third-winningest coach in women's basketball history, Stringer (now women's head coach at Rutgers University) turns so-so teams into certified champs.



Can't Stop Won't Stop

SIGN LANGUAGE

Each juice entry will be accompanied by symbols. The guide below explains each icon.

- Slinging Records
- Fabulosity
- Street Cred
- Cooler Than Thou
- On the Come-Up
- Behind-the-Scene Boss Hog
- Elevating the Game
- Humanitarian Warrior
- Legendary Status
- Underground Might

Icons by **BOB ECKSTEIN**

SHIRLEY ARMADA-RODRIGUEZ

JAUNEL MCKENZIE The 19-year-old supermodel—seen in Gucci, Gap, and Adidas campaigns—was the first Jamaican national to be featured in American Vogue.

LIFE AFTER SHADY

DJ GREEN LANTERN SURVIVES THE WRATH OF 50 CENT.

DJ Green Lantern parted ways from his cushy job as Eminem's DJ when it surfaced that he was questioning the potency of 50 Cent's Jadakiss diss on volume 5 of *The Come Up* DVD. But the Evil Genius still won top honors at this year's Mixtape Awards, and he has kept flashing his powers in five key ways.

1. In the mid-'90s, the Rochester native deejayed parties in and around his hometown before making it big on N.Y.C.'s mixtape scene. As long as the RIAA chills, it means continued green for Green.

2. Green also had to bounce from Em's Shade 45 on Sirius Satellite Radio. But let's not forget he maintains a weekly syndicated program with XM Satellite Radio.

3. What do mainstream, street-level, and underground rappers like Ludacris ("Number One Spot"), Jadakiss ("The Champ Is Here"), and Immortal Technique ("Bin Laden") have in common? All three have been blessed with beats by the Evil Genius.

4. Rumors swirl that Jay-Z, Russell Simmons, and others want to house the homeless talents of one Green Lantern. Nothing's been signed, but lawyers are reportedly talking.

5. Finally, there's Green Lantern's debut album. The compilation, which is expected to still feature the Shady/Aftermath family sans G Unit, is generating plenty of industry buzz as the title has changed from *Armageddon* to *The Invasion*. Guess it's not the end of the world for Green after all. *Chuck Creekmur*

VERTU The Maybach of cell phones: Form, function, and sexiness collide in your earhole.

100 99 98 97 96 **95 Jaunel McKenzie** **94 DJ Green Lantern** **93 Vertu** 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75 74 73 72 71 70 69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60 59 58 57 56 55 54 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Jaunel McKenzie



DJ Green Lantern

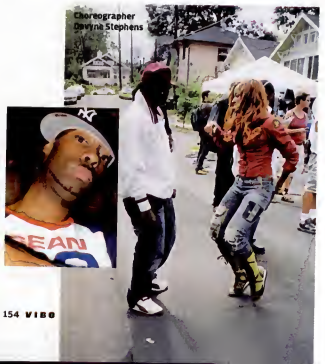
- Corporate Clout
- Cultural Caché
- Innovator
- So Damn Useful
- Award Winner
- Jock Magic
- Sex Appeal
- Intellectual Influence
- Sparking a Movement
- Regional Force
- Inspiring Leadership
- Hollywood Heavyweight
- Filthy Rich

MCKENZIE: ALBAN CUMPOL; GREEN LANTERN: CRAIG WITHERBY

James "Bubba" Stewart 92
Theo Sedlmayr 91
New Era 59FIFTY 90
Rachel Roy 89
Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley 88
Devyne Stephens 87



Rachel Roy



Choreographer Devyne Stephens

JAMES "BUBBA" STEWART Known as the Tiger Woods of motocross, this teen champion is the first African-American to dominate dirt biking.

THEO SEDLMAYR If you're negotiating a label deal, you want this entertainment attorney on your side. Just ask 50 Cent, Eminem, and Mobb Deep.

NEW ERA 59FIFTY These official fitteds are the perfect topping for any flavor, from white tees to blazers.

THE BLUEPRINT

FASHION DESIGNER RACHEL ROY BREAKS DOWN THE RULES.

Influential clothing designer Rachel Roy is a powerhouse at husband Damon Dash's Rocawear label and the founder of her own critically acclaimed fashion line selling at fine boutiques. She shares her 10 habits of being a highly fabulous lady.

1. Always put your girls first. A true girlfriend is worth a million dollars and much classier than those who put guys first.

2. Be in control. Never let anyone make decisions for you. Own your life and take control.

3. Find what you love and make a career out of it. Eventually you will become successful because your heart is in it.

4. Invest in shoes. Manolo Blahniks elevate any outfit and allow you to own any room you walk into.

5. Confidence, confidence, confidence: If you believe in yourself, others will, too.

6. Don't be afraid to have opinions, whatever they may be. Using your brain is much sexier than someone who believes in nothing.

7. Travel as often as possible. Seeing other cultures is the key to understanding.

8. Make honor a priority. If you say you will do something, make sure you do it.

9. Be humble. You will end up getting more respect and attention if you are the real deal without the drama.

10. Leave every person a little happier and with a smile on their face. Happiness and laughter are the keys to life.

DAMIAN "JR. GONG" MARLEY With "Welcome to Jamrock," Jr. Gong gets massive on dance floors from Kingston to Toronto.

DEVYNE STEPHENS This hot-stepper has choreographed the videos and stage shows for top acts like Usher and Ciara.

ROY: MARVI LACAR. STEPHENS: SHAKUR STOKATOS/MAGIC

PAUL RODRIGUEZ JR. In skateboarding, credibility is everything—and P-Rod's got it. He's affiliated with the elite Girl Skateboards team and rocks his own Nike kick.

EDWARD ENNINFUL This New York–based fashion stylist creates looks for runway shows, magazine editorials, and haute couture advertising campaigns.

KERRY WASHINGTON With star-making roles in *She Hate Me* and *Ray*, the gifted Bronx bombshell is now a hot Hollywood property.

ALL ACCESS THE DVD MAGAZINE Raw and real, *All Access* takes its cameras into rap's epicenter.

STEPHEN A. SMITH His blustery tell-it-like-it-is persona and incisive game commentary make this writer and ESPN analyst an all-sport MVP.

TOUGHER THAN LEATHER

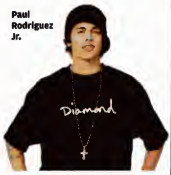
AL WISSAM'S INTRICATELY EMBROIDERED LEATHER JACKETS ARE ALL THE RAGE ON THE STREETS AND IN VIP SECTIONS.

The design team at Al Wissam takes its job very seriously. "We want to turn our jackets into pieces of art," says Wissam executive Wood Dudley of the company's conceptually themed, frequently knocked-off leathers, whose intricately stitched decorations feature everything from African tribal patterns to high-end cars. "We want to do something with meaning behind it, whether it's worldly or cultural art."

The inspiration to treat their clothing like a canvas emerged when the Detroit company wanted to distance itself from competitors like Avirex and Helly Hansen. Using a satin-stitch technique that hides the sewing lines, Wissam is able to create the deep grooves and sharp cut marks characteristic of their jackets' distinctive patterns. Rappers Fat Joe, Fabolous, Ludacris, and the Game all sport Wissams, which cost around $1,000.

Last year's *Scarface*-inspired jacket and a Bill of Rights model (with the Constitutional amendments rendered in more than three million stitches) are the latest in Wissam's line of thought-provoking—and fast-selling—designs. While it often takes Dudley and his coworkers up to two months to design one, it takes the company much less time to push it. "We're selling out of jackets so fast we can't even put them on the Web site," he says. That ain't no joke!

Jayson Rodriguez



Paul Rodriguez Jr.

86 Paul Rodriguez Jr.
85 Edward Enninful
84 Kerry Washington
83 *All Access the DVD Magazine*
82 Keyshia Cole
81 Stephen A. Smith
80 Al Wissam Leathers


Wissam's Bill of Rights jacket

RODRIGUEZ JR.: JOHN HUMPHREYS



Jessica Alba

Lil Wayne 79

Gwen Stefani 78

Jessica Alba 77

Terrell Owens 76

Glacéau vitaminwater 75



Terrell Owens

THE TAKEOVER

LIL WAYNE INHERITS THE CASH MONEY THRONE FROM BABY.

Define juice.
Respect, success, honor, self-respect, and heart.

Who taught you about it?
Baby is a man of power, and that's all he preached. I was put under Baby at like 9 years old.

How did you get power in the industry?
Now that I own my own company, and I'm the president of Cash Money Records, power is a big thing to me. Baby's getting tired of this shit, and he's trying to chill for a minute, so I'm gonna take over.

Can power corrupt?
Power can corrupt if you let it. Power is a drug so you have to know when to take it and how to live off it.

What was the most powerful move you ever made?
Staying with Cash Money.

There's no part of you that thinks, "Hmm, the Roc could have been a better move?"
Yeah, but you gotta think, "If I move there, I'll become a more successful rapper just because there are more people listening." But if I stay here, I become the president of a well-established company and a real mogul. I know I'm never gonna take over Roc-A-Fella, so I made the power move staying with Cash Money.

Toshitaka Kondo

TERRELL OWENS One of the NFL's leading receivers, his relentless offense and flamboyant style made the Eagles one of the most magnificent teams of 2004.

GLACÉAU VITAMINWATER The Snapple of the hip hop generation made news when 50 Cent introduced his formula 50. Now he owns a small stake in the company.

ALBA: GEORGE PIMENTEL/WIREIMAGE

EGO TRIP VH1's *Race-O-Rama* was one of the most hilarious analyses of race to hit cable TV ever, and these guys were responsible for making it happen.

COMMON With Kanye West's production and Common's smart lyricism on *Be*, this Chi-town MC is finally tasting long-deserved mainstream success.

TALES FROM THE 'HOOD

QUINCY "QD3" JONES III IS HIP HOP'S DOCUMENTARIAN.

Media entrepreneur Quincy "QD3" Jones III has chronicled the moments, the music, and personalities of hip hop culture on all six of his documentary DVDs.

> ***Tupac Shakur/Thug Angel: The Life of an Outlaw* (2002)** A heartrending look into 'Pac's notorious yet influential life.

> ***The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-Boy* (2002)** Showcases the significance of breakin' as one of hip hop's core elements.

> ***Beef* (2003)** Relives some of rap's most explosive rivalries.

> ***Beef II* (2004)** Part II is just as polarizing as the original.

> ***Letter to the President* (2004)** Explores rap music's powerful effect on society and politics.

> ***The MC: Why We Do It (2004)*** How the master of ceremony has risen from hype man to the voice of the culture. *Rondell Conway*

CHRIS OFILI Two words: elephant dung. The Nigerian-British artist came back with a major New York exhibition, further exploring black sexuality and imagery through his controversial paintings.

100 99 98 97 96 95 94 93 92 91 90 89 88 87 86 85 84 83 82 81 80 79 78 77 76 75

74 **ego trip**

73 **Sidekick II**

72 **Common**

71 **QD3**

70 **Chris Ofili**

69 68 67 66 65 64 63 62 61 60 59 58 57 56 55 54 53 52 51 50 49 48 47 46 45 44 43 42 41 40 39 38 37 36 35 34 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Common



***Tupac Shakur/Thug Angel: The Life of an Outlaw* (2002)**



***The Freshest Kids: A History of the B-Boy* (2002)**



***Beef* (2003)**



***Beef II* (2004)**



***Letter to the President* (2004)**



***The MC: Why We Do It* (2004)**

COMMON; CHRISTIAN LARTEY



Craig Newmark 69
Adidas Y-3 68
John Singleton 67
Catherine Hughes 66
Kara Walker 65



DESPERATELY SEEKING...

CRAIG NEWMARK, THE ONLINE VISIONARY BEHIND THE ENDLESSLY USEFUL *CRAIGSLIST.ORG*.

If you were the dude who created craigslist, you'd be entitled to an ego bigger than the World Wide Web. But online genius Craig Newmark is all about keeping it humble.

Newmark, 52, is the Russell Simmons of online classified ads. That may seem ridiculous—like being the Juelz Santana of dental hygienists—but for the roughly 2 million people who visit one of his *craigslist* city sites every week, founder (and, he stresses, customer service rep) Newmark is something akin to a revolutionary force with a twist of accidental celebrity. "I remind myself I'm no big deal," Newmark says. "My site is in no way about me, it's about the people who use it."

The company, started by Newmark in 1995 and now run with CEO Jim Buckmaster, is a kind of nonprofit/for-profit hybrid; the site only charges San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York employers posting help wanted ads—at rates far below those of Web sites like *monster.com*. Today, *craigslist* says it receives 10 million users, 5 million classified ads, and one million forum postings every month. There are CL sites in 170 cities in 34 countries, and growing. Revenues have been estimated at more than $7 million a year.

Before *craigslist*, people by and large had to pay for classified ads if they wanted to sell a couch, find an apartment, or get some hot girl-on-girl action. *Craigslist* dispensed with the fee and tedious registration. The site remains pop-up and banner-ad free, making it easy to download. And it's always open and anonymous. The tacit philosophy of "do unto others" guides the majority of transactions. Matchmaker service, customer service rep, online visionary—it's all in a day's work for Newmark. *Todd Inoue*

ADIDAS Y-3 Adidas's stylish line of kicks and fits, designed by Yohji Yamamoto, is still as fly as ever.

JOHN SINGLETON The acclaimed producer/director signed a $16 million contract with Paramount and MTV Films for three projects, including *Hustle & Flow*, and guided Andre 3000 through his leading role in *Four Brothers*.

CATHERINE HUGHES Founder and chairperson of Radio One, the largest African-American-owned radio broadcasting company, Hughes expanded her empire by launching TV One, a lifestyle cable channel.

KARA WALKER Her exploration of race, gender, and sexuality through plantation-era silhouetted figures confronted the art world with the legacy of American slavery.

SINGLETON: JEFF VESPA/WIREIMAGE

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ALLEN IVERSON As his successful move from point guard to shooting guard finally paid off, this notorious bad boy made good with his best all-around season in the NBA.

CRYSTAL FULLER This young African-American doctor studies the relationship between drug use and AIDS in the 'hood, specifically in New York, New Orleans, and Baltimore.

BOSTON SPORTS TEAMS The Patriots' Super Bowl championship luster must've rubbed off on the Red Sox, ending the fabled curse. Now this neurotic sports city is the new "title town."

Allen Iverson 64

Crystal Fuller 63

Boston Sports Teams 62

Lacoste 61

VOULEZ-VOUS?

A QUICK HISTORY OF EVERY HIP HOPPER'S FAVORITE POLO SHIRT MAKER, LACOSTE.

> In 1927, French tennis champ René Lacoste was dubbed "Le Crocodile" after betting for crocodile luggage at a high-stakes match.

> His buddy embroidered a crocodile on one of the blazers he wore on court. People have since erroneously called the symbol an alligator.

> In 1933, Lacoste and knitwear manufacturer André Gillier started La Société Chemise Lacoste and produced the first polo shirt decorated with the famous logo. It was also the first time a brand symbol decorated the outside of an article of clothing.

> Up until 1951, the only polo color available was white.

> In 1951, Lacoste linked up with David Crystal, an American apparel marketer who owned the Izod and Haymaker apparel lines. They launched the Izod Lacoste line in America. (Jack Izod was a top-notch British tailor.)

> The crocodile became ubiquitous at U.S. boarding schools and Nantucket summer homes and would attain nationwide popularity by the 1970s.

> In the '80s, droves of poseur preps layered colored polos with collars flipped up and rocked them under blazers and pullovers.

> Lacoste lost ground in the '90s because of the rise of grunge and gangster-inspired hip hop gear. But the logo was still coveted by vintage collectors and fashion nerds, as well as the usual country-club set.

> In 1992, Izod and Lacoste severed ties. Both brands still exist seperately, but only Lacoste retained the logo.

> Today, Lacoste polos have been adopted by the newest version of hip hop fashionista: The preppy thug. As hip hop's constantly evolving tastes embraced designer umbrellas, argyle sweater-vests, and cufflinks, the old crocodile proved he still had bite. *Jeff Sanico*



IVERSON: © 2003 NBA ENTERTAINMENT. PHOTO BY ROCKY WIDNER/NBAE VIA GETTY IMAGES. LACOSTE: JOHNNY RUÍZ/WIREIMAGE


IT AIN'T WHERE YOU FROM
WHERE YOU AT
boost mobile
"Where You At?"
Includes Nationwide Boost™ Walkie-Talkie
Boost Mobile™ Pay-As-You-Go.
Check out boostmobile.com for all the latest information.
MOTOROLA
i887



Edward P. Jones 60
RZA 59
Rob Tewlow (aka Reef) 58
The Diplomats 57
Zingy.com 56
Pitbull 55



EDWARD P. JONES His novel *The Known World*, examining slavery from the perspective of black slave owners, earned the Pulitzer Prize.

RZA Wu-Tang Clan's chief producer reinvigorated his flagging career by scoring a slew of Hollywood movies and penning the fascinating *The Wu-Tang Manual*.

ROB TEWLOW (AKA REEF) This music industry vet (he was Fat Joe's A&R at Atlantic Records) has reinvented himself as senior producer for specialty programming of Sirius Satellite Radio's Shade 45, Eminem's new broadcasting platform, which rocks uncensored hip hop 24/7.

THE DIPLOMATS With deals at three record labels and the successful Sizzurp cognac, this Harlem-repping crew has staked its own piece of the rock.

ZINGY.COM The go-to site to lace your cellie with the latest hip hop ring tones, graphics, and games.

THAT SOMETHING *ESPECIAL*

P. DIDDY APPOINTS PITBULL TO RUN BAD BOY LATINO

Cuban-American impresario-in-the-making Pitbull, recently handpicked by P. Diddy to head Bad Boy Latino, breaks down the top five reasons Latinos have *jugo*.

1. "We're very hard-working people, and we want to get out of the 'hood. We're very strategic about everything. A good example is Emilio Estefan—he's an animal."

2. "We're hot-blooded, exotic, and like to have a good time, so that's what rubs off on others. People like to be around us. There's a lot of flavor to what we do—from our food to our women to our music. Especially the music. Everybody dances to it, whether they speak Spanish or not."

3. "We adapt to environments quickly. We know how to blend in. We know how to put on the right clothes, strut into a business meeting, and speak business. Therefore, it makes sense. If it makes sense, it makes dollars."

4. "We know our history. If you look at different Latin countries, there's always been some type of struggle. Whether it's a dictatorship, a revolution, or whatever, these people have had to flee their country and leave everything they love and come over to a whole new country and make it happen. Our hustle game is disgusting."

5. "Within our culture, there's so much diversity. We come in all colors, shapes, sizes, and forms. And we joke around about it, like, Hey *morena* [dark-skinned girl]! We don't take things to heart."

Angie Romero

THE DIPLOMATS: JOHN RICARDO/RETNA


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KARINA TAIRA



L-R-G 54

EA Sports 53

Mario 52

Ian Rowe 51



L-R-G With Kanye West onboard, the hip hop clothing line surged forward, merging earth and street, casual and stylish.

EA SPORTS They sacked their software competition by locking down exclusive video rights to the NFL for the next five years.

TURN ON THE RADIO

R&B HEARTTHROB **MARIO** BREAKS DOWN THE POWER OF THE NUMBER ONE SONG.

Why is having a number one hit powerful?
It just shows that you have the capability to take yourself to different levels of music. "Let Me Love You" was also so relevant to me; I just figure the song will be around forever, like the ones you play at birthdays or weddings. Also, now, I see what I'm here for. I don't see myself doing anything else. This is the moment a lot of artists wait their whole careers for—to get a number one hit.

Did it give you a sense of power to be like, "Damn, I'm 18, and I already got a number one hit"?
Not even. You're proud of yourself. You definitely recognize your achievements, but you're humbled, because somebody else could come right behind you. You never get to the point where you just think that's good enough.

Does more power come from a number one song as opposed to just a hit song?
A number one song hits different cultures and audiences. It's not just pop or R&B or hip hop.

Did you notice a difference in how fans reacted toward you once you had a number one song?
My audience just grew to a different level. I had grandmothers coming up to me like, "I love your song. It's a beautiful song." "Let Me Love You" was everything a woman wanted to hear. If it's a girl who was really going through that situation at the moment, hearing that song maybe put a smile on her face.

Does a number one single differentiate you from other young singers the media groups you with?
It's definitely something that could stop comparisons with other artists. It's also taken me a lot of places around the world that maybe some artists haven't been. I just came from Australia, man, and I got to go to Africa. In Baltimore, where I'm from, I know some kids that haven't left their block in four years. And for me to have that opportunity, it's just unbelievable sometimes.
Toshitaka Kondo

IAN ROWE The MTV public affairs and strategic partnerships veep helped register more than 20 million young voters last year through MTV's successful Choose or Lose campaign and is heading up *think* MTV, which aims to get more kids in college.

MARIO: ANTHONY CUTAJAR/LONDON FEATURES



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Destiny's Child

Vickie Stringer 50

Destiny's Child 49

Dave Chappelle 48

Malcolm Gladwell 47

Sean Garrett 46



Malcolm Gladwell

TEN BOOK COMMANDMENTS

FROM CONCEPTION TO CONSIGNMENT, A STEP-BY-STEP TO SELF-PUBLISHING FROM STREET-LIT QUEEN VICKIE STRINGER.

Rule #1: Get booked. "The first thing you need to do is write a hot book," says Stringer, who penned her first manuscript, *Let That Be the Reason*, while incarcerated.

#2: Get the cosign. "Enlist people to review your copy until it's polished to platinum. Those critics can be your brother, your mother, or—as in my case—your cell mate."

#3: Study the game. When Stringer began shopping her book to publishers, rejection letters flooded her box. "So, I went to the library and read books on publishing," Stringer recalls. "I followed the step-by-step process outlined in Dan Poynter's *The Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book*. I love to pay homage to him because his book was helpful to me."

#4: Make paper. "Your research should help you find a self-publishing outfit. But it's gonna cost about $2 to $3 per book."

#5: Don't front on the...front. "Get yourself a good cover design. My first cover was the cheapest [$300]. That was me in the Spanish *mami* spandex pants in front of my BMW."

#6: The game is to be sold. "I would get up in the morning, get in my car," Stringer remembers of her time slanging her first novel, "and I'd catch you pumping your gas, at the salon, or at the car wash."

#7: Tighten your sales pitch. "It helps if you have a catchy one-liner. My first book's was about a female hustler."

#8: Consignment is a strong word. "Find distributors who specialize in working your type of book. But they won't pay until 90 days, no matter what. The distributor is selling on consignment, too."

#9: Expand the empire. "I have 26 authors now and 31 titles," Stringer says of her Triple Crown Publications. "I reinvest all the money I make from one book into the next to keep it going."

#10: Business is business. "You can provide a service and make a living," says Stringer of rule 10 (which could have been rule 1). "But coming up, we feel like it's so foreign, like the only product we can move is narcotics, and that's not true."

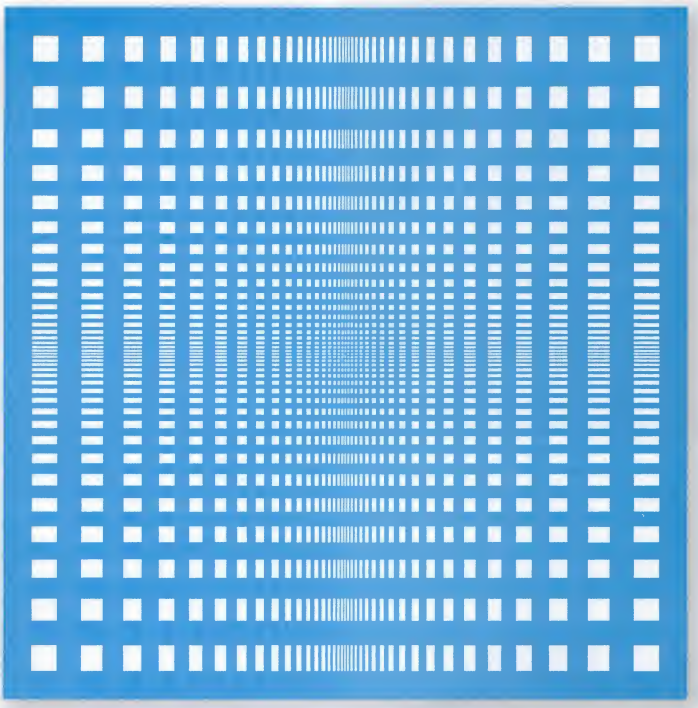
Erik Parker

MALCOLM GLADWELL He wrote the best-selling books *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* and *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking* that keep audiences contemplating and cash registers ringing.

SEAN GARRETT They don't call him "the Pen" for nothing. This Grammy-nominated songwriter's string of 2004 hits included Ciara's "Goodies," Usher's "Yeah!," and Destiny's Child's "Lose My Breath" and "Soldier."

DESTINY'S CHILD: CHRIS POLK/FILMMAGIC; GLADWELL: BROOKE WILLIAMS

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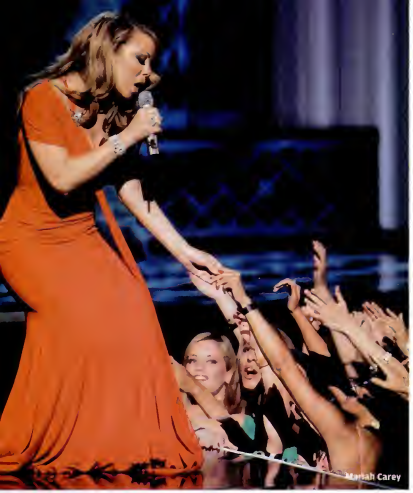


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The Saline Project 45
Terrence Howard 44
Mariah Carey 43
Xbox Live 42
John Legend 41
Clara 40



THE SALINE PROJECT The video collective focused its talents to direct eye-popping shorts for Eminem, the Roots, and the Game.

IN CELEBRATION OF MIMI

WE PAY HOMAGE TO THE ZANY DIVA WITH THE MULTI-OCTAVE RANGE AND IMPECCABLE SONGWRITING SKILLS BY REMEMBERING **MARIAH CAREY'S** 10 JUICIEST MOMENTS.

> Mariah announces her split from Tommy Mottola in 1997, ending what she calls a "stifling" marriage. No wonder the songstress dubbed their Bedford, N.Y., mansion "Sing Sing."

> In the 1997 video for "Honey," a newly unattached Madame *Butterfly*, wearing Gucci stilettos and a killer cream Bond-girl bikini top, struts the stuff Mottola supposedly tried so desperately to keep under wraps.

> MC and Derek Jeter set the tabloids ablaze with their sizzling 1997–'98 romance. The relationship strikes out after less than a year.

> A year later, she steals Mexican balladeer Luis Miguel's *corazón*. They're seen canoodling everywhere from Aspen to Acapulco.

> Mariah kicks her evil alter ego's butt in a bathroom catfight in 1999's "Heartbreaker."

> She baffles MTV *TRL* host Carson Daly and audiences worldwide with her sudden striptease and popsicle-distributing spectacle in 2001, claiming, "I just want one day off when I can…eat ice cream and look at rainbows."

> After leaving ominous voice messages on her Web site ("I'm trying to understand things in life right now…."), Mariah is hospitalized for "extreme exhaustion." Her breakdown comes before *Glitter*'s spectacular lack of box-office sparkle.

> Virgin signs Mariah for a reported $80 million in 2001, one of the biggest record deals in history. After her meltdown, the label pays her $28 million to bounce. She finds a cozier home at Island Def Jam.

> In *Rolling Stone*, Eminem insinuates he dated Mariah, but then says, "I just don't like her as a person." She strikes back with "Clown," on 2002's *Charmbracelet*.

> Mottola calls this year's *The Emancipation of Mimi* "her best work yet." But in the "We Belong Together" video, Mariah, in the same Vera Wang gown she wore for her actual wedding to Mottola in '93, runs away from a visibly older male. *Angie Romero*

CAREY: JASON MERRITT/FILMMAGIC; LEGEND: MARIE ELDERKIN

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Mos Def

Mos Def 39

MTV International 38

Jermaine Dupri 37

PSP (PlayStation Portable) 36

Rich Harrison 35

PSP (PlayStation Portable)



THIRD-WORLD PREMIERE

MTV FLEXES ITS MIGHTY CORPORATE ENTERTAINMENT MUSCLE AND OPENS SHOP IN AFRICA AND THE CARIBBEAN.

The world wants their MTV, and the music channel is giving it to them. Having already established channels in far-flung lands from Argentina to Poland to Taiwan, the network is now taking on the African diaspora, recently launching an English-speaking channel called MTV Base in 48 sub-Saharan countries, and planning to extend its service across the Caribbean this October through a channel called Tempo.

Frederick Morton, the Saint Croix–born MTV executive who spearheaded Tempo, says that the islands need a channel like this as a platform for Caribbean culture. Rather than attempting to create worldwide cookie-cutter communities uniformly jamming to 50 Cent and Britney Spears, the network says its goal is to adapt each station to the tastes of the 18- to-34-year-old audience in that region.

Still, some worry that MTV inevitably dampens creativity and fosters global homogenization. "Local musicians will be forced to conform to MTV standards and compromise their original sound in the process," says M-1 of dead prez. "I've already seen MTV's impact in places like Amsterdam and Paris."

"The channels reflect local culture in different ways," responds Bill Roedy, president of MTV Networks International. "In India, the style is more self-effacing and humorous. In Japan, it's edgier. Our channels are so tailored that some places don't even realize they're watching MTV."

K'naan, a Somalia-born Canadian rapper whose video, "Soobax," is on regular rotation on MTV Base, is willing to give the project a chance. "The channel is still in its infancy, so I don't want to attack an infant, but it remains to be seen if it will deliver on its promises." One thing everyone seems to agree on: Viewers in Africa and the Canbbean will definitely be tuning in. *Imani A. Dawson*

PSP (PLAYSTATION PORTABLE) The precision of Sony's handheld PlayStation was a godsend to video game freaks and the inspiration for a brilliant episode of *South Park*.

RICH HARRISON This producer established himself as a heavy hitter behind the boards by crafting go-go-inspired hits for Beyoncé, Amerie, and Jennifer Lopez.

MOS DEF: ANTHONY MANDLER/CORBIS OUTLINE

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Rocket: "Let's bust a cap in his ass!"



Mouse Alexander: "You just said don't shoot him, right? Well I didn't. I choked him."



Buck Swope: "All you need to do is walk over, get down, and come inside us!"



Basher Tarr: "See, the accent is crucial. It's the first thing people notice."



Paul Rusesabagina: "We have been abandoned. There will be no rescue. We can only save ourselves."



Detective Graham Waters: "And the right message is look at this black boy I just bought? Well, fuck you very much."

Pharrell Williams 34
Sin City 33
SwishaHouse 32
Reggaeton 31
Don Cheadle 30

SIN CITY Frank Miller's flawed characters jumped off the page under Robert Rodriguez's codirection, revitalizing the bloated comic-book film genre by adding starkly visual elements of noir.

SWISHAHOUSE The Houston label's screwed-and-chopped records propelled acts like Mike Jones, Slim Thug, and Paul Wall into public (un)consciousness.

REGGAETON The hybrid of dancehall and streetwise rap *en español* went worldwide as forceful personalities like Daddy Yankee, Pitbull, Don Omar, and Ivy Queen led the charge.

THE DON

ACTOR DON CHEADLE HAS THE CLOUT TO TAKE ON MEANINGFUL PROJECTS.

This is undeniably Don Cheadle's year. He coproduced *Crash* and starred in *Hotel Rwanda*, earning an Oscar nod. Cheadle brings a sense of wisdom to every character he plays—from a porn star to a cold-blooded killer. Here are some of his most memorable lines (left) from these films.

- ***Colors*** **(1988)**
- ***Devil in a Blue Dress*** **(1995)**
- ***Boogie Nights*** **(1997)**
- ***Ocean's Twelve*** **(2004)**
- ***Hotel Rwanda*** **(2004)**
- ***Crash*** **(2005)**

Jozen Cummings

DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS: © TRISTAR PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; OCEAN'S TWELVE: © WARNER BROS./COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; HOTEL RWANDA: © UNITED ARTISTS/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION; CRASH: LIONS GATE/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION


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T.I.

T.I. 29

AllHipHop.com 28

Alicia Keys 27



Alicia Keys

ALLHIPHOP.COM This news mill has evolved into a trusted, must-bookmark source of breaking hip hop info.

SURF'S UP

HONORABLE MENTION

HIP HOP BLOGS HAVE THE INTERNET GOIN' NUTS.

If hip hop is truly the CNN of the streets, bloggers are the field reporters, surfing the reaches of the Web and bringing back a sea of truth, irreverence, gossip, and opinion. From underserved regions (Cali rap, UK grime), politics (feminism, black power), and beefs (50 Cent vs. the Game, T.I. vs. Lil' Flip in real time) to the sublime (the "Top 30 Bun B Features of the Year," odes to second-tier MCs, aka "weed carriers"), it's all there. And there's free music. Lots of it: exclusives, remixes, rarities, and throwbacks.

The downside to this free-for-all is that blogs produce a plethora of half-baked flotsam. But for every uninformed kid transmitting poorly reported conjecture, there's a seasoned vet bringing personal musings on life and tangential observations—things rarely seen in traditional artist profiles or record reviews. And, much as political blogs led to the fall of alleged White House pawn Jeff Gannon, hip hop blogs have begun to create their own news stories as opposed to simply picking over whatever the brick-and-mortar urban press has served up. The backlash against New York radio station Hot 97's "Tsunami Song" was spearheaded by *hiphopmusic.com*, and this spring, when Bizzy Bone wigged-out on a Houston radio show, a link to the recording of his interview was posted to *houstonsoreal.blogspot.com*. But by the time print media got hip, the blogs were on to something new: Young Jeezy and Gucci Mane had released a pair of diss songs toward each other that were made available for download. Unlike the big dotcoms of the turn of the millennium, blogs aren't attempting to usurp print media, they're simply enhancing and forwarding the discussion, talking about what's hot and what's going on—not just now, but right now.

kris ex (tearscribe.blogspot.com)

BLOGS TO VISIT

> **Chantelle Fiddy's World of Grime** *(chantellefiddy.blogspot.com)*: Ground zero for UK urban music.

> **Cocaine Blunts** *(cocaineblunts.com)*: Championing forgotten and unheralded hip hop greats with an occasional bit of newness.

> **Government Names** *(www.governmentnames.blogspot.com)*: Everything from A to Z-Ro.

> **Hiphopmusic.com** *(hiphopmusic.com)*: Level-headed hip hop politics.

> **HoustonSoReal** *(houstonsoreal.blogspot.com)*: Covering everything from the Geto Boys to Mike Jones and beyond.

> **VIBE Online's Lynne d Johnson: A Day in a Life** *(lynnedjohnson.com/diary)*: Beats, rhymes, and feminism.

T.I.: JONATHAN MANNION; KEYS: STEVE GRANITZ/WIREIMAGE


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Queen Latifah



Nike Air Trainer Max 91

Nigo 26

Shaquille O'Neal 25

Scott Storch 24

Queen Latifah 23



Jeremy Scott Adidas



Nike Air Force 180



Easter Bunny Nike Air Force One



Nike Air Max 95 Green Monster

NIGO The iconoclastic Japanese designer behind A Bathing Ape made it an unexpected 'hood staple.

SCOTT STORCH The low-profile Philadelphia producer of "Still D.R.E." and "Lean Back" kept the hits coming with "Candy Shop," "Just a Lil Bit," and "Get It Poppin'."

HONORABLE MENTION

SNEAKER PIMPS

PRICEY SNEAKER BOUTIQUES ARE POPPING UP LIKE MUSHROOMS.

You want exclusive kicks, and you want them now. Not willing to scour dusty mom-and-pop spots, you take a shortcut and visit the pricey sneaker boutique. Once mainly found in Tokyo and New York, this new breed of retail has popped up all across the country. We found five superhip stores in five major cities and asked them what was good.

> CLIENTELE, New York
267 Lafayette Street (between Spring and Prince Streets) 212-219-0531
Personal favorite: "Nike Air Trainer 3 [Medicine Ball] and Air Max 95 Green Monster," says manager Jeremy Mengel.

> UNDEFEATED, Los Angeles
112 1/2 La Brea Avenue and Beverly Boulevard 323-937-6077
Priciest kick: "Jeremy Scott Adidas, $600. There were 25 pairs made. We got three pairs, which sold out within an hour," says general manager Fred Lozano.

> PHLI, Chicago
5210 South Harper Avenue (between 52nd and 53rd Streets) 773-493-7454
Nicest shoe collabo: "Nike Air Force 180 [Union collaboration]," says manager Tyjuan Mathis.

> SHOE GALLERY, Miami
244 Northeast First Avenue and Third Street 305-371-2063
Bestseller: "The Easter Bunny Nike Air Force One did well for us," says owner Danny Waserstein.

> CLASSIC SOLES, Atlanta
310 East Paces Ferry Road (between Peachtree and Piedmont Roads) 404-869-2871
Personal favorite: "Nike Air Trainer Max 91 [gray and yellow]," says manager Cory Sontag.

Jeff Sanico

QUEEN LATIFAH: DIMITRIOS KAMBOURIS/WIREIMAGE

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Steve Stoute 22

Ludacris 21

Wangari Maathai 20

MOTHER EARTH

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE-WINNER WANGARI MAATHAI HAS SURVIVED TORTURE AND BEATINGS TO FIGHT FOR A HEALTHY PLANET AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

Think we live in a world without superheroes? Just look around, extraordinary people are saving the world in their own ways. For years, Wangari Maathai has been organizing Kenyan women to plant trees—more than 30 million of them. Doing so filled the immediate need for more firewood, the main source of energy in rural areas. "Poverty is both a cause and a symptom of environmental degradation," Maathai, 65, tells *The Progressive*.

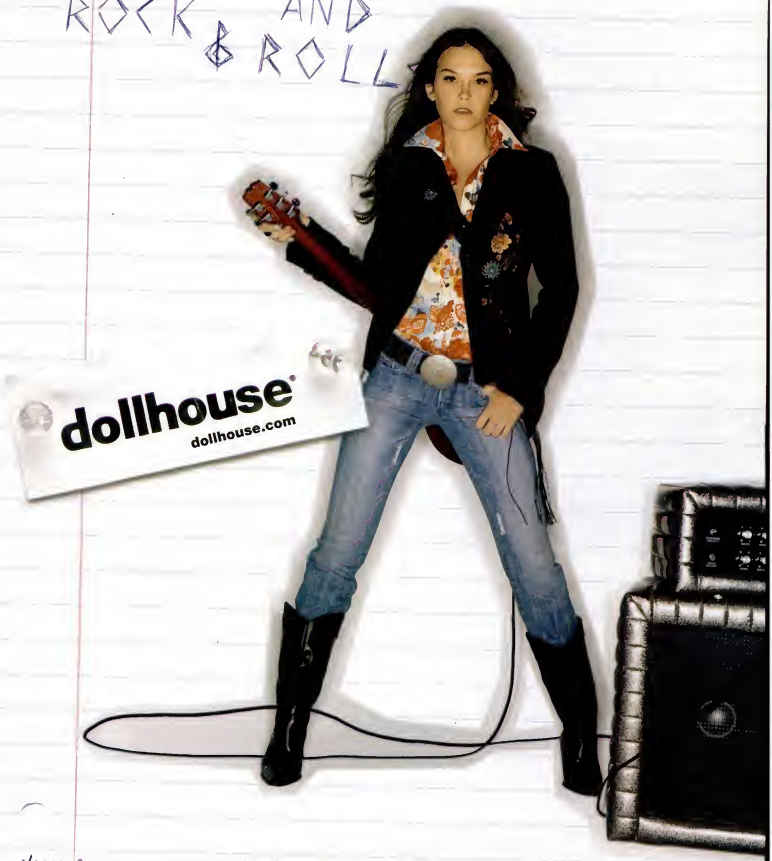
But as the project grew, Maathai (the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate) and others soon saw that the government played a role in Kenya's environmental problems. "I knew that even if I planted all the trees downstream," says Maathai, "the stream itself was being destroyed by the government." She and other women protested and held seminars to alert the public. Unhappy with her rabble-rousing, the Kenyan police beat and imprisoned her. Now celebrated as the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Maathai is getting her message heard and continuing the fight for women's rights, human rights, and the environment all rolled into one.

Laura Checkoway

MAATHAI | ERIC FEFERBERG/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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1993 Mercedes-Benz 500E


1996 Dodge Viper GTS Coupe

HOT WHEELS

RALPH GILLES DESIGNS THE CARS YOU COVET.

African-American auto designer Ralph Gilles, 35, is responsible for conceiving the hustler's car of choice, the Chrysler 300, also known as the Baby Bentley. To gain insight into his inspiration, we asked him which cars he coveted as a kid and why.

> **1978 Porsche 911 Turbo** "The rear-end view is unbelievable, and they flared the fenders out several inches on both sides."

> **1969 Plymouth Barracuda** "It is one of the pinnacles of the muscle-car era."

> **1988 BMW M3** "It took the racing look to the public streets without any delusions."

> **1993 Mercedes-Benz 500E** "It was pretty amazing because you wouldn't assume this thing had 300-and-some-odd horsepower."

> **1996 Dodge Viper GTS Coupe** "The whole car is just a beautiful expression and such a violent car in terms of the body and engine."

Ralph Gilles 19
Marc Ecko 18
Ice Cube 17
Sean "P. Diddy" Combs 16

MERCEDES-BENZ; © MERCEDES-BENZ

CLOTHES-MINDED

CRITIC **ROBIN GIVHAN** DECIDES WHAT'S DIVINE AND WHAT IS SO LAST YEAR.

The Washington Post fashion editor Robin Givhan—one of the most powerful African-American women in her field—has the juice to make or break designer collections. For Givhan, looking unfabulous is an occupational hazard, but she breaks down the method behind the madness.

> LOVES: "Murky off-colors like pea greens, mustard, cantaloupe, and sort of dirty colors. Basically, I'm bohemian-slash-classic. I like classically shaped jackets that are cut from surprising fabrics or with hippie embellishments. Belgian designer Dries Van Noten is my personal bread-and-butter designer."

> HATES: "Pastels and floral prints—anything that's too frilly or girly."

> ON TRAVELING: "My favorite thing is a really great raspberry-colored, zip-front cashmere, because I'm always cold on the plane. I hate the sloppy traveler look. It's like, 'I'm sorry, did you bathe before you boarded?'"

> ON JEWELRY: "How could you not be a fan of diamonds? I also love pearls, silver, and less familiar semiprecious stones like citrine, peridot, and garnet."

> IN PARIS: "When I first went there, I noticed that people would get dressed up when they went to dinner. Not in a fussy way, but there would be a great wrap or a piece of jewelry or a sparkly handbag."

> IN MILAN: "People are really attuned to luxury and fabric. When I go there, I find myself desperate for the most beautiful, simple cashmere sweater. You'll see these Italian women going to the market wearing sable coats."

> AT A RUNWAY SHOW: "I want to keep my own personal label choices to myself rather than have people see me wearing Armani at an Armani show. I think it's my own sense of being objective and not wanting to look like a groupie. I'm there to write a review, not to be the supportive team player."

Jozen Cummings

JORDAN By now, Jordans are simply iconic. And the company that makes them is celebrating its 20th anniversary.



Lil Jon

15 **Robin Givhan**

14 **Russell Simmons**

13 **Jordan**

12 **The Game**

11 **Lil Jon**

LIL JON: MICHAEL BLACKWELL


LeBron James


Usher

Eminem 10

Grand Theft Auto 9

Tyler Perry 8

LeBron James 7

Barack Obama 6

GRAND THEFT AUTO Its controversial "San Andreas" edition pushed the limits of video game violence, sex, mayhem, and cross marketing with a highly successful eight-CD box-set.

TYLER PERRY His unique combination of religion, social awareness, and cross-dressing antics revitalized popular urban theater and made box-office magic out of mad black women.

JUMP BALL
IS LEBRON JAMES MORE AKIN TO HIS AIRNESS OR JAY-HOVA?

LeBron James's high-flying dunks and athletic prowess draw comparisons to Michael Jordan, but King James's casual cool and cultural clout put him in closer line with Jay-Z. So is it Team Jordan or Team Roc?

> **So Much More** 'Bron 'Bron capped his sophomore set with a last-month flourish that saw him finish third in the league in scoring at 27.2 points per game. Add in his 7.4 boards and 7.2 dimes a game, and he joins his Airness as one of only five players in NBA history to average 27-7-7 for a full season.

> **Slick Like a Gato** After failing to land gold at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, James returned home to witness the birth of his first child. But when pressed by reporters for details, including his son's name, the Ohio player brushed off the questions as cavalierly as Jay-Z has about his relationship with B.

> **Money Ain't a Thang** Before turning pro, James had money stacks bigger than most NBA point guards. Like Mike, LBJ signed with Nike, but rather than the $2.5 million Jordan received from the sneaker giant in 1984, the then high school senior netted a seven-year deal valued at more than $90 million.

> **The Takeover** Following the book of Hov, LeBron fired his management team and formed King James Inc. alongside his Akron homies. Months earlier, Jay-Z opted to get money with childhood friends when he separated from Roc-A-Fella cohorts Damon Dash and Kareem "Biggs" Burke.

> **Still Number One** James has had to watch from home the past two years as fellow draftee Dwyane Wade has blossomed into a postseason sensation. But like Coach Carter, whose sales have been eclipsed by 50 Cent, LeBron is still the top draw in the league. And his interviews are hotter!

> **Verdict:** It's the Roc, you bastards!

Jayson Rodriguez

JAMES: VICTOR BALDIZON/WIRE IMAGE VIA GETTY IMAGES; USHER: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE

HONORABLE MENTION

INDUSTRY PEOPLE

THESE MUSIC EXECS ARE MAKING SUCH PRODIGIOUS POWER MOVES, THEY MERIT A SHOUT-OUT.

> **JIMMY IOVINE,** Chairman of Interscope Geffen A&M Records
Killed it with: 50 Cent, Eminem, G Unit, the Game, Keyshia Cole, Snoop Dogg, the Black Eyed Peas, and Common

> **CRAIG KALLMAN,** Co-chairman of Atlantic Records
Killed it with: T.I., Twista, Mike Jones, Paul Wall, Fabolous, and Asylum Records

> **MARK PITTS,** Vice president of A&R, Zomba Label Group
Killed it with: Usher, Ciara

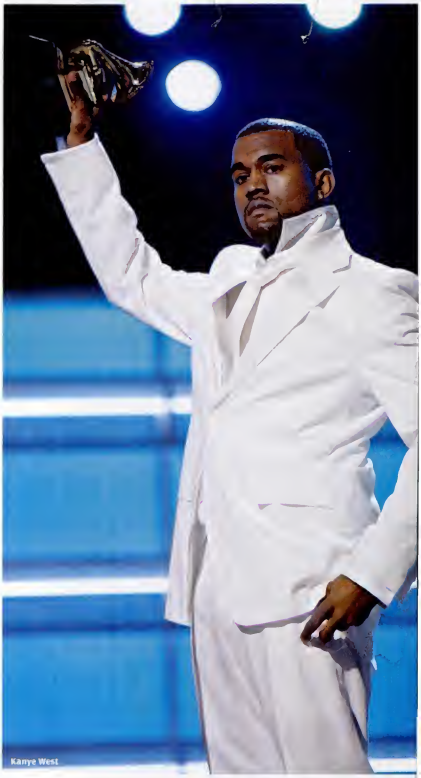
> **ANTONIO "L.A." REID,** Chairman of Island Def Jam Music Group
Killed it with: Jay-Z, Kanye West, Mariah Carey, Young Jeezy, Ludacris, and Bobby Valentino

> **JEFF ROBINSON,** CEO/president/founder of MBK Entertainment
Killed it with: Alicia Keys, Melyssa Ford

> **PAUL ROSENBERG,** President of Shady Records
Killed it with: Eminem, Shade 45, D12, and Shady Ltd.

> **CHRIS STOKES,** CEO of T.U.G. Entertainment
Killed it with: Omarion, Marques Houston

Rondell Conway



Kanye West

KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE

5 **Usher**

4 **Kanye West**

3 **Jay-Z**

2 **50 Cent**

1 **???**

(drumroll...please turn the page)

JAMIE 1

GASSED UP
WOMEN FAWN, MEN LAUGH AT HIS JOKES, AND HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS WRITE HIM BIG CHECKS. **JAMIE FOXX** HAS MORE JUICE THAN ANYONE. **CHEO HODARI COKER** GOES ALONG FOR THE RIDE AS MR. OSCAR SWITCHES LANES TO MUSIC, SPEAKS ON THOSE NUDE PHOTOS, AND EXPLAINS WHY OPRAH WINFREY IS GOD. PHOTOGRAPHS BY GUZMAN


ERIC BISHOP
Oscar Confidential
In Loving Memory
Estelle Talley
TAXI



DRIVEN:
"I'm like a '57 Chevy," says Foxx, who counts Luther Vandross and Lionel Richie as musical influences. "And the young producers are that new engine."

Track jacket by Puma

MAMA PROBABLY TOLD ANGELIQUE FROM THE TIME SHE was a pretty little girl never to talk to strangers. But mama couldn't possibly have meant the man driving the iridescent platinum 2005 Lamborghini Gallardo.

This tall, café au lait vision of legs and long curly hair is walking alone on a sultry Miami night, seemingly oblivious to the rubbernecking she's causing. But the $200,000 spaceship on wheels hovering at the curb turns her head instead.

"Aaaay!" says Jamie Foxx, with a wide smile. In a white T-shirt, Adidas trucker cap to the side, and a thin diamond bezel and platinum chain, the 37-year-old actor is in full Ricardo Tubbs *Miami Vice* mode.

"I thought it was you," she says, recognizing the movie star.

"What's your name?" Foxx asks.

"Angelique," she says. "Nice to meet you."

"Angelique? Listen, we're going to be doing a thing at the Astor tomorrow. Gimme your phone, and I'm gonna put my number in it."

She hands it to him, and Foxx expertly navigates the device with modus operandi dexterity, pressing the menu button on her phone and programming in his number with his right hand.

"Ashley, you said?"

"Angelique," she responds. "Very nice car, sir."

"You can ride, anytime," he says, handing her phone back. "Angelique, right?"

You're Jamie Foxx, and it's good to be the king. You don't really have to memorize anyone else's name, because everybody remembers yours. And the women you meet, all they want is a good time—and all you want is the experience.

"My thing is, I ponder a woman," Foxx says. "I ponder how her thighs are, her body, and her face, what she smells like."

But he stops short of total commitment. "No," Foxx says firmly. "I'm not getting married. The statistics! The average guy doing the average thing, living the average life, is still breaking up."

And as we all know, Jamie Foxx is living anything but the average life. One minute, he's hanging out by the pools of hotspot hotels like Miami's Raleigh and Delano, basking in his own starlight. And the next, he's working his day job, shooting guns and racing speedboats as he prepares for *Miami Vice* with director Michael Mann and costar Colin Farrell, the young Irishman being touted as the new Tom Cruise. And of course, he works nights, too, recording an album for J Records with Timbaland, the Neptunes, and Kanye West, among others. The girlies just fit in with the overtime.

And Foxx is anything but an average guy. When he moves now, the world watches, rumors swirl, and people pay attention to more than what he does on-screen. Like the nude photos that surfaced before Oscar time, involving Foxx and a nubile woman. Allegedly, a construction worker found them in the trash near Foxx's Las Vegas home and attempted to sell them without success. (He later claimed that men associated with the actor threatened him, an accusation that Foxx emphatically denies.)

Foxx finds the whole thing funny. His philosophy is old school, like that of Richard Pryor: What doesn't kill you ends up in your stand-up act. "It didn't matter to me, 'cause I wasn't with no man or no animal, and I never done anything in my life that I'm ashamed of," Foxx says. But he thought the risqué flicks might have cost him his Oscar shot, if not for the misfortunes of another superstar.

"The day [the photos] were announced, Michael Jackson was going to court," Foxx remembers. "There are so many people that have raised the bar of outlandishness, I ain't even scraping the surface. Bill Clinton made it good for everybody. You expect bad things."

A rumor he doesn't mind—though he insists it isn't true—is the one that he and Oprah are seeing each other. "Me and Oprah? I wouldn't be mad at that. She's so attractive, not only is she attractive to look at, she got different gears," Foxx says. "I believe God is Oprah. We get to heaven, get behind the pearly gates, and there she is, and we'll be, like, 'Ah, man, you fooled us.'"

But for now, since his grandmother passed away last year at 95, there's only one woman in his life: his 11-year-old daughter, Corinne. She and her mother live close to Foxx in Tarzana, Calif., and when she visits, he shuts down everything else.

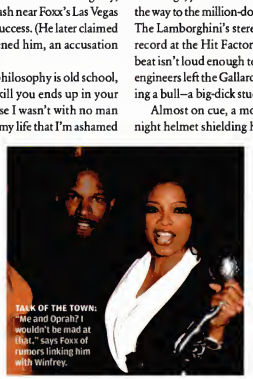
"Fatherhood is an inborn computer that clicks on," he says. "Me? I'm the ultimate ice cream for my daughter, never missing any event. So when you say it's tough when you have a business that can keep you busy, and you just send the money, you have so many things missing. You never know the feeling of coming to your kid's rescue, when your daughter is like, 'I really need you, Daddy.' And it may be for some bullshit. The dog is dying. But I say, Daddy is gonna make sure that dog doesn't die. And in return you hear, 'Thank you, Daddy.'"

> "THE PICTURES DIDN'T MATTER TO ME, 'CAUSE I WASN'T WITH NO MAN OR NO ANIMAL, AND I NEVER DONE ANYTHING IN MY LIFE THAT I'M ASHAMED OF."

Foxx is quiet for a moment, smiling at the memory. "I don't want to be in the twilight of my career and have my daughter say, 'Well, he wasn't really around.' To me, that would be the worst thing in the world."

IT'S A FEW HOURS AFTER THE HEAT CHOKED AGAINST THE Pistons, when Foxx zooms on to Miami's McArthur Causeway. From the bridge, you can see the multicolor downtown Miami skyline all the way to the million-dollar homes of the interconnected Star Island. The Lamborghini's stereo system is blasting a song Foxx is soon to record at the Hit Factory Criteria, but the Jagged Edge–produced beat isn't loud enough to drown out the roaring engine. The Italian engineers left the Gallardo noisy. They want you to know you're riding a bull—a big-dick stud of a car you can barely keep fenced in.

Almost on cue, a motorcyclist dressed in black leather, a midnight helmet shielding his eyes, pulls up to the side of the Lambo. He revs his engine—the universal "lets get it on" signal—trying to get the old bull to charge.



TALK OF THE TOWN: "Me and Oprah? I wouldn't be mad at that," says Foxx of rumors linking him with Winfrey.

Foxx weaves in and out of traffic, utilizing the high-speed defensive driving course he took while preparing for his Oscar-nominated role as a hijacked cabbie in *Collateral*. He contemplates the race, the possibilities, speeding up a bit, but not committing quite yet.

The motorcycle zooms ahead. The rider, through his visor, nods, revving again. Foxx looks forward, confident, assured. All that's missing is the green flag–waving girl. But Foxx then smiles and begs off. The

[PREVIOUS SPREAD] STYLING BY LIZ CORAN FOR CREATIVE EXCHANGE AGENCY. MAKEUP BY LAZETTE LITTLEJOHN. GROOMING BY CHIDERA SIMON. [THIS PAGE] ARNOLD TORRES/WIREIMAGE



HOME-COURT ADVANTAGE: "The Oscar enhances you," says Foxx, here at his Tarzana, Calif., estate. "But you can't let it go to your head. And that's tough because I really do have it. And I busted my ass to get it."

(First spread) Leather jacket by Compania Della Pelli; shirt by Grail; jeans by Diesel; hat by Makins Hats; necklace by Nagual. (This page) Suit by Oswald Boateng; T-shirt by Evan York; jewelry by Nagual; sneakers by Y-3.

cyclist, disappointed, lowers his head and speeds away.

"Okay, you can breathe now," Foxx says, taking his foot off the gas only slightly. He has nothing more to prove. The old Foxx who came to Miami in 1999 to film *Any Given Sunday* with Oliver Stone—his star-making turn as egotistical run-and-gun quarterback Willie Beamen—would have chased this guy until he was just riding on rims, eager to prove himself.

"I spent every dime I had," he says of that time, laughing. "I didn't make money from that movie. I was renting a Ferrari and a Hummer. And I had just bought a Mercedes S500. I was so ignorant, I'd drive the Ferrari, and if someone said the Hummer was hotter, I'd make my man pull over so we could switch cars. Nigga, I was stupid! But we had a ball!"



TICKLED: "Fatherhood is an inborn computer that clicks on," says Foxx, flanked by Nickelodeon's Kids' Choice Awards with his only daughter, Corinne.

This time, while he's here shooting *Miami Vice*, he owns the Lamborghini, and he didn't even have to touch his multimillion dollar *Vice* paycheck to do it. He gets in clubs free and paid next to nothing for the three-bedroom Miami Beach duplex with flat-screen televisions in every room, a double balcony, and a hot tub on the roof—thanks to his celebrity.

"The Oscar enhances you," he says. "And if you're able to hold that speeding car in the middle of the road, get used to the speed of pulling out a revolver and pointing it at him from his truck.

"Nigger die," he said as he pulled the trigger. Foxx raised his hands, and the man and his friends started laughing. The gun wasn't loaded. They pulled a U-turn and did it again and again.

When he finally got to school and told his principal, there was no sympathy. "Well you made it to class, didn't ya?" Foxx remembers his principal saying. "You made it, you're here, everything is fine." Foxx shakes his head at the memory.

"ERIC BISHOP IS A COUNTRY BOY WHO BELIEVES THE WORLD IS ALL GOOD WITH A FEW BAD PEOPLE. JAMIE FOXX FOUND OUT THAT THE WORLD IS ALL BAD, WITH A FEW GOOD PEOPLE."

it, and not abuse it, that's the thing," Foxx says. He's talking about his career, but this same philosophy could also apply to his driving at high speeds as well as to his everyday life: One wrong turn and you'll crash—hard. "The moments of abuse," he says, "that's what will kill you. I've partied and had fun. But you can't let it go to your head. And that's tough because I really do have *it*," he says of his success. "And I busted my ass to get it."

Anytime Foxx gets a big head, his oldest friend in the world, Eric Bishop, reminds him who he really is. Bishop, of course, *is* Foxx. And it's the relationship between his two sides that helps him maintain that balance. "Eric Bishop is a country boy who believes the world is all good with a few bad people," he explains. "Jamie Foxx found out that the world is all bad, with a few good people. And even those good people, if the money's right and the situation is right, can turn bad on you, too."

ERIC BISHOP WAS BORN ON DECEMBER 13, 1967, TO LOUISE Annette Talley and a man who has since changed his name to Shaheed Abdullah. When his biological parents wouldn't—or couldn't—raise him, he was adopted by Estelle and Mark Talley, the same couple that had adopted Foxx's mother.

Miss Talley, as folks called her, was 58 at the time. But she still had plenty of energy to mind a rambunctious boy. She was old school, would smack you upside your head for even looking wrong. She disdained secular music and started him on the piano by the time he was 5. And she became the only mother he'd ever know.

Terrell, Texas, a small town 25 miles outside of Dallas with a population under 20,000, was home to the kind of racism Eddie Murphy used to make jokes about, but to Foxx was very real growing up. "I was in slavery. I got called nigger every day," he says, emphasizing the hard *er*. "Every day! The minute I crossed those railroad tracks it was 'nigger this' and 'nigger that.'" He tells the story of riding his bike to high school for track practice as a senior, and a redneck

While he was experiencing the hard realities of racism, Foxx's grandparents were too old to worry about the injustices of life. You thank the Lord for what you were given, you do the best with what you have, you pray, and you keep it moving, paving the way for another generation who will have an easier time than you.

Long after his grandparents went to sleep, Foxx would be up late watching the only TV in the house, which was in his room. He'd tune into *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* religiously—learning from the humor of the famed host, sidekick Ed McMahon, and other comedians like Steve Allen and Nipsey Russell.

On the radio, Foxx was listening to Lionel Richie, Luther Vandross, Prince, and Michael Jackson. There was a whole world outside of Terrell calling to him. "Everything I saw on TV became me and my music. That's how I talked to a girl. I'd call a girl and put the phone up to the radio."

Foxx would push play on his recorder and blast Luther Vandross or Lionel Richie. They would sing the things he was too shy to put in his own words. But by the time he put the phone back to his ear, there was often only a dial tone. He'd shrug his shoulders with frustration. "I was too deep for my city sometimes," Foxx says. "But then

CHRIS POLITI/MAGNIQUE

when I got on the football field, that was your ass."

Years later, it would all come together: the star athlete and sensitive musician. His keyboard prowess would get him a full ride to United States International University in San Diego (now Alliant International University) on a classical piano scholarship. While trying to start a music career in L.A., he'd end up going to comedy clubs, eventually wowing crowds on open-mike nights as Jamie Foxx, a name he chose because it wasn't gender specific, and female comedians would often get called to the mike quicker.



THE RIGHT STUFF: Foxx shotguns his acting chops in Oliver Stone's *Any Given Sunday*.

Those club appearances led to a spot on the acclaimed sketch comedy show *In Living Color*, the popular *The Jamie Foxx Show*, and a slew of bad movies. He became young, rich, and arrogant, coasting on his talent. By the late '90s, when he was aware of his mistakes and wanted to make a change, he had a hard time convincing people that he was more than a washed-up comedian who used to be a star.

And reportedly, if Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, the multitasking millionaire, could have thrown a more convincing spiral, Foxx would perhaps still be trying to make his case. Initially, Combs was slated to star as a talented but egotistical quarterback for a demanding, aging coach, to be played by Al Pacino. Oliver Stone, who cowrote and directed *Any Given Sunday*, has insisted Combs didn't work out due to scheduling conflicts, and so Foxx got to audition.

It may seem like a no-brainer now, but at the time, Master P had a better chance of starting for the Lakers than Foxx did of landing a lead in an Oliver Stone movie. "For me in black Hollywood, I had burned my chances," Foxx said. "Luckily, white Hollywood didn't know who I was. Oliver Stone had never heard of me."

The former star quarterback of the Terrell Tigers wore #13 in the movie, and he threw the football like darts all over the field. Foxx stood with one of the most challenging directors in Hollywood and passed with flying colors. More importantly, he earned the respect of Pacino, who showed him that there's more to acting than just showing up.

"Al Pacino is not a tough guy," Foxx says. "Al Pacino is not a gangster. He's an artist." Pacino rehearsed scenes with Foxx until they had them cold, teaching him that, despite the fun to be had in the Miami nightlife, they had to get it right on set because, as Pacino warned him, "Ollie is not going to let us get away with cheating, he's going to want it all."

> "IN BLACK HOLLYWOOD, I HAD BURNED MY CHANCES. LUCKILY, WHITE HOLLYWOOD DIDN'T KNOW WHO I WAS. OLIVER STONE HAD NEVER HEARD OF ME."

And that became his new credo: giving it all. Foxx says Michael Mann was unfamiliar with his previous level of stardom, even after



TRADING PLACES

Not only is Eddie Murphy one of Foxx's idols, but the two also experienced similar runs at success. A quick glimpse at their careers shows some noteworthy parallels.

TV

Murphy: After a stint on the New York City stand-up circuit in the late '70s, Murphy joined *Saturday Night Live*, portraying characters like Dion Dion, Mr. Robinson, and Buckwheat.

Foxx: Following a stand-up stint in Los Angeles and Santa Monica during the early '90s, Foxx joined the cast of *In Living Color* and made a splash via his unforgettable character she-male Wanda.

Winner: Murphy. While both had America in stitches, Murphy elevated the "Black Guy" slot on sketch comedy shows to MVP status with his Buckwheat character alone. (*Oh*-Tay!)

FILM

Murphy: With performances in *Trading Places*, the *Beverly Hills Cop* films, *48 Hours* and its sequel, *Coming to America*, *Dr. Dolittle* and *Dr. Dolittle 2*, and the *Shrek* franchise, Murphy proved his mettle as a box-office draw.

Foxx: Following *In Living Color* and his own sitcom, *The Jamie Foxx Show*, Foxx gained momentum in film. Roles in *Ali*, *Collateral*, and *Ray* prove that Foxx's star value has just begun.

Winner: Foxx. Of course Murphy's comedies have become classics (Axel Foley had his own theme song). But Foxx's performance in *Ray*, for which he won a leading man Oscar, lands him among distinguished gentleman like Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington .

MUSIC

Murphy: With the help of Stevie Wonder, Rick James, and Michael Jackson, Murphy released three albums. Despite having a hit, "Party All the Time," Murphy's music was panned by critics.

Foxx: An R&B crooner, Foxx released the critically admired but commercially slight *Peep This* in 1994. His cameos on Twista's "Slow Jamz" and 50 Cent's "Build You Up" raised eyebrows–in a good way.

Winner: Foxx. When Murphy was partying all the time, Foxx was tickling the ivories and sharpening his vocals. With a new album on J Records, Foxx's music career is on the rise.

Dan Frosch

ANY GIVEN SUNDAY: WARNER BROS./EVERETT COLLECTION; MURPHY: ANN CLIFFORD/GETTY IMAGES

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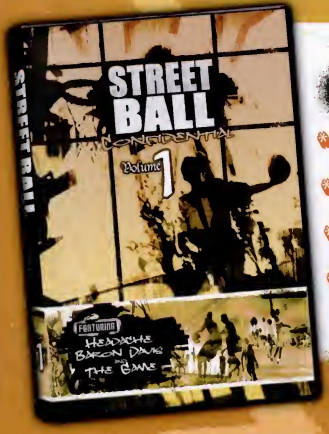
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Any Given Sunday, but he was cast as "Bundini" Brown in *Ali* because Will Smith knew his old friend was gonna give it everything he had. Mann, who's even tougher on actors than Stone, was impressed enough with Foxx in *Ali* to cast him opposite Tom Cruise in *Collateral*. But it was *Ray*, a side project between *Ali* and *Collateral*, that would take Foxx to a place where only two black men—Sidney Poitier and Denzel Washington—had walked before.

Now he's in a position where he can play the definitive leading man, but more often than not, he chooses to be part of an ensemble. Even in *Miami Vice*, he's sharing the spotlight. But, surprisingly, Foxx prefers to be the second in charge. "I always consider myself like Ed McMahon," Foxx says, referring to Johnny Carson's perennial *Tonight Show* foil. "I think of Will Smith as Johnny Carson. You know how hard it is to be Johnny Carson? All I gotta do is play my role. Laugh when it's funny. And when it ain't funny, I'm giving you advice. That's perfect for me."

"I CONSIDER MYSELF LIKE ED MCMAHON. I THINK OF WILL SMITH AS JOHNNY CARSON. ALL I GOTTA DO IS PLAY MY ROLE. LAUGH WHEN IT'S FUNNY. AND WHEN IT AIN'T FUNNY, I'M GIVING YOU ADVICE."

But he doesn't envision himself as your usual wingman. "I'm Ed McMahon with an attitude," he says of his role in *Miami Vice*, making sure to let you know it's a Crockett *and* Tubbs movie.

JAMIE'S NODDING HIS HEAD TO THE BEAT, AND RIGHT NOW, the Hit Factory Criteria studio is living up to its name. It's 1:30 in the morning, and he's just shifted into third gear. The Jagged Edge beat he was playing earlier in the car has been isolated to just the drum track, thanks to the magic of Pro Tools. Foxx and singer/producer Tank sit across from each other, their foreheads almost touching. Tank is behind the Yamaha Motif ES keyboard, playing gospel chords.

They look like fraternal twins, almost the same height, similar muscular builds, matching white T-shirts. They assemble lyrics together in a cipher, freestyling.

"Do do do TO do! Do do do TO do!" Foxx begins. "Don't tell your girl what I do! / She might wanna replace you!"

They laugh. Foxx gets an idea and runs to the booth. He starts rapping in the Notorious B.I.G.'s voice. "Some say the X makes the SEX spec-TAC-ular." He smooths it out a bit.

And that's how it goes. He feels his way around the song, playing with the beats, collaborating until something sticks. Foxx is a classically trained multi-instrumentalist who has a Pro Tools set-up at home, but he's confident enough to let the youngsters tell him what's right and wrong.

"I'm like a '57 Chevy," he says. "An old car with a new engine. And the young producers are that new engine. So you can take those ideas that are fragmented and put them all together. And they can say, 'Okay, that's cool Foxx.'"

Angie Stone's former manager Breyon Prescott brought Foxx to J Records. All it took was a visit to Foxx's studio to hear some songs and impressive performances at Clive Davis's Grammy party in '04 to seal the deal.

"I'm feeling good about it because I've played it for the label and I've seen their reaction," says Peter Edge, the A&R man known for his work with Alicia Keys, Angie Stone, and Meshell Ndegeocello. Edge says those who may be skeptical about Foxx's music, or might have only seen his humorous songs, like the tennis ball song he did at the ESPYs for Serena Williams, will be surprised. "It takes the right kind of hit to turn someone from a maybe to a done deal. The fact that he can turn his talent in a few different directions is an advantage where everything is synergistic and combines. That's the world we're in. It's a good time for Jamie Foxx."

It's 4:30 a.m., and things are slowly winding down. Foxx has got to be on the set in five hours for more *Miami Vice* physical training. He's played the songs, and he knows they sound good—even though there's still more to record before he starts shooting in six weeks. "I definitely want to be successful in the music. I want to marry the acting and the music in certain places, where people will be able to see things that they haven't seen in a long time," he says. "Not that it's never been done before, but can we capture it that way? That's the challenge."

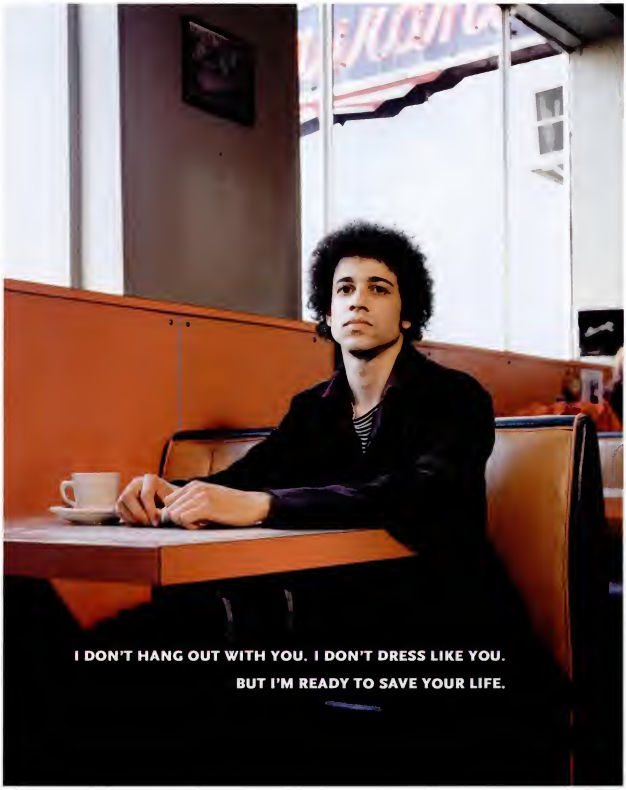
In Hollywood, there's always a challenge. There's always a new plateau, a next goal, bigger movies, larger budgets, different genres to conquer. Foxx is no different, but he happens to race at his own pace these days. "No pinnacles," he says of his career. "Would you rather be on the railroad track going nowhere, or be way up in the air where you can't catch better air and then fall? Look at a train. A train may slow down, but it's still on the track. The train could speed up, but it's still on the track. So when you look at Oscar, it's a gold spike on the track of your career."



SHOWTIME: Foxx, sitting in at his post-Oscar party, has recorded with 50 Cent and Kanye West.

TODD WILLIAMSON/FILMMAGIC

And therein lies the triumph. Because the power of being Jamie Foxx is that you can do anything you set your mind to. "You know what I started doing?" Foxx says with his wide, white wall of a smile. "Not doing shit I don't do. I know I can tell a joke. I know I can write a song. I know I can act on television and in a movie. Those are my things. At the end of the day, if you can say *on my own terms*, that's what power is."



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COLD AS ICE

With his street-lore raps and easygoing delivery, **YOUNG JEEZY** has turned his hustle legit. But as the heat surrounding his dustup with former collaborator Gucci Mane intensifies, can the Snowman truly change his flakes? **DAVID PEISNER** explores Jeezy's thug motivation. Photographs by Jonathan Mannion



QUEEZED BETWEEN A KRISPY KREME donut shop and the Mail Handlers Union Local No. 310 is Chanterelle's Cafe & Catering, a long-running soul food joint that's headquarters for this afternoon's filming of Young Jeezy's "Trap or Die" video. The Atlanta cops have blocked off the street, and at least 200 bodies tremble when the song's bass commands. "I brought the 'hood out," Jeezy says, puffing out his chest between catnaps. "I like to see that."

Although Jeezy's packed plenty of living into his 25 years, his face remains remarkably childlike: round and kind of chubby, with the beginnings of an impish smile playing at the corners of his mouth as he surveys the crowd outside.

And it's a hell of a turnout for a cat who hasn't yet released *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*, his first official album on Def Jam. But according to the label, the combined sales of his mixtapes run well over 100,000 units and his *Trap or Die* DVD has pushed more than 200,000 units. "You know you're doing something when you go to shows and half the motherfuckers have your face on their shirts and everyone's reciting your mixtapes word for word," Jeezy says. His buzz was strong enough to pull in some heavyweight guests for *Thug Motivation 101*, including Trick Daddy, Young Buck, Bun B, and T.I. "Rappers I listen to were like, 'You wanna swap some shit out? I do one for your album, you do one for mine?' And this is just off mixtapes."

Yes, Jeezy knows something about being hot. So never mind the 85-degree weather today; he's dressed from head to toe in black. For starters, the long ebony shorts and the outsized T-shirt adorned with the logos of his own record label, Corporate Thugz Entertainment (CTE), and his crew, U.S.D.A. (United Streets Dopeboys of America). Add the black fitted cap and midnight bandana, and you get the feeling that there is something dark about this man.

"Ever since I had the ability, I was always living good," he says with a smile. More pointed questions about his finances are rebuffed with laughs, ambiguous references to his "business," and lots of "you-know-what-I-means." But in a rap game where everyone wants to convince you they're a real OG, Jeezy's tight-lipped routine is perhaps the most incriminating thing about him. Well, that and the fact that he's been sporting ice from Jacob the Jeweler and driving Ferraris since he was a teenager. "I came in the game with shit that people rap to get."

> "I got tired of being the dude with the Benz outside but who's nobody in the club."

JAY JENKINS, AKA YOUNG JEEZY, GREW UP SHUTTLING between his mother's home in Atlanta and his grandmother's house in South Georgia. As a kid, he learned his street hustle by listening to records by UGK, Master P, and 8Ball & MJG. "In the 'hood, you can't ask people how to make money," he explains. "Everybody's trying to keep everyone else down. The next man isn't going to put you on game. But I listened when they said do this and that on record, and I learned."

Jeezy first got into music on the business side, founding CTE with partner Kinky B after the two met in a boot camp for juvenile offenders. (They were there, according to Kinky, for "mischief.") But after several rappers they'd signed disappeared on them—a few reportedly landed in prison on murder raps—Kinky pushed Jeezy to rap. At first, Jeezy was reluctant; up till then, he'd only fiddled around on the mike. But then he had an epiphany.



REFLECTION: "I was riding around one day like, Damn, you ain't done shit with yourself."

"I was riding around one day like, Damn, you ain't done shit with yourself," Jeezy recalls. "You're just like everybody else. You'll be out here until you're gone. Either somebody kills you or you go to jail. I didn't want to be a statistic."

But avoiding the inevitable wasn't his only inspiration. "I got tired of being the dude with the Benz outside but who's nobody in the club," he continues. "Cats like Jermaine Dupri get all the attention. You're in the back going, I've got a chain and a watch, but at the end of the day, I'm just some dude. I could be gone tomorrow. I wanted to go up in the club with my chain on, and I wanted it to mean something. I wanted to be somebody."

On the mike, Jeezy developed a style steeped in street lore. He stood apart from the rattling crunk that Lil Jon and company were branding as the sound of Atlanta. With his signature easy drawl and bouncing beats, his closest hometown antecedents were guys like Pastor Troy. "In my 'hood, they call me Jeezy the Snowman," he spits on Gucci Mane's club hit "Icy," and then adds, "Get it? Jeezy the *Snow*man"—just in case anyone out there thinks he earned his moniker frolicking in his front yard on cold winter mornings.

"He was kicking a lot of real shit," says T.I., who's recorded with Jeezy. "It was shit only people who know what they're talking about would say."

Two underground releases, 2003's *Come Shop Wit Me* and last year's DJ Drama mixtape *Streets Is Watching*, flooded the South. Tracks like "Air Forces" and "Trap or Die" quickly jumped from mixtapes into the clubs, creating a street buzz that couldn't be tuned out. "When I first heard him, I thought, This is different," says UGK's Bun B, who first collaborated with Jeezy in 2004. "He's not the most lyrical person in the world, but everyone don't want to hear tricks on the mike. They want the truth."

Jeezy made a connection with producer Jazze Pha, which led to an invitation to join Boyz N Da Hood–a crew of streetwise solo MCs (see sidebar). Jeezy inked his solo deal with Def Jam, and shortly thereafter, the group was signed to Bad Boy South. And while he stayed onboard with Boyz, the crew struggles to compete with its own shining star.

WHILE HE'S NOW ABLE TO BE "SOME-body" in the club and in the parking lot, stories swirl of Jeezy's rumored criminal connections, including his alleged involvement with the Black Mafia Family (BMF)–a shadowy (though apparently well-financed) outfit that purports to be a record label. Perhaps most ominous is his imbroglio with fellow Atlanta rapper Gucci Mane. After the two collaborated on "Icy," their relationship soured amid charges of unscrupulous business dealings from both sides. Underground Diss tracks emerged, with Gucci calling out Jeezy's BMF connections on "Gucci vs. Jeezy," and Jeezy offering $10,000 to anyone who could bring him Gucci's chain on "Stay Strapped."

> "He's not the most lyrical," says Bun B, "But everyone don't want to hear tricks on the mike. They want the truth."

Then on May 10, Gucci allegedly shot and killed Henry Lee "Pookie Loc" Clark III, a Macon, Ga.–based rapper who's said to have been an associate of Jeezy's CTE partner, Kinky B. Gucci's camp claims he was attacked by five men and acted in self-defense. Neither the police nor the district attorney's office in Dekalb County, Ga., would comment on whether Jeezy was a subject of the Gucci Mane investigation.

A week after the "Trap or Die" video shoot–after Gucci's arrest–Jeezy is kicking back in a booth at Gladys Knight & Ron Winan's Chicken & Waffles in downtown Atlanta. "Real talk. I just think it's a marketing scheme, a business stunt gone bad," he says of Gucci's involvement with the law. "I've got too many good things going on to entertain that."

When pressed a little more about their beef, his voice rises. "Man, I've been on the road, I'm fresh off the bus–and that's it," he says, glaring across the table. Silence falls. He breathes, and his easygoing demeanor returns with an exhale. "That dude doesn't concern me. I don't even have him in my memory."

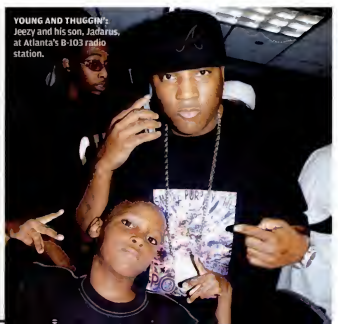
While questions concerning Gucci can send him spinning, inquiries about Jeezy's alleged BMF connections elicit cold stares–and little information. "They're a label," he says. "I did music with them. That's why people connect me to them. I don't know anything else about them." His curt replies hardly quell suspicions, but they're genuine in at least one respect: He's trying to keep his checkered past from encroaching on his rosy future.

"The hardest part about changing is making the decision that it's what you want to do and sticking to it," says T.I., who's fought similar battles in his own career. "It's hard when you've been living one way all your life. Then, at some point, you've got this motherfucking shot. You've gotta straighten up and drop everything else."

Jeezy's cell phone rings. He opens it, reads a text message, and sighs. "Ah, man," he says, shaking his head. "They're up there talking about that Gucci shit on the radio."

And in what seems a moment of revelation, he lets loose. Kinda.

"I've lost so much, man," he says. "I couldn't even begin to tell you how I ain't never been happy. I've seen my partners get their brains blown out. I've seen good people go, bad people go. I don't even know how I saved myself. Because it seems like nobody from where I'm from ever makes it out." Not yet, anyway.

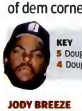


YOUNG AND THUGGIN': Jeezy and his son, Jazlarus, at Atlanta's B-103 radio station.

JEEZY AND SON: JULIA RIVERA; ICE CUBE: D. STEVENS

WHAT'S HOOD

With Young Jeezy emerging as the first solo star from his Boyz N Da Hood clique, here's a report on the rest of dem corner boys.



KEY
5 Doughboys = Dope
4 Doughboys = Smokin'
3 Doughboys = Rocks
2 Doughboys = Needs more work
1 Doughboy = Straight jacked

JODY BREEZE

The rundown: The youngest of the Boyz, Breeze exhibits an enthusiastic, seasoned T.I.-like flow and swagger beyond his 21 years.

Potential: The Griffin, Ga., native outshined all but Jeezy on BNDH's hit "Dem Boyz." But his T.I. sound could be a gift or a curse on his solo album, *A Day in the Life of Jody Breeze.*

Rating:



DUKE

The rundown: 8Ball & MJG devotees may remember the slick-talking Duke as "Big Duke the Georgia Kingpin" from the veteran Memphis duo's 1999 LP, *In Our Lifetime Vol. 1.*

Potential: Duke has already proven he can hold his own among living legends, but this OG's glory days could well be behind him.

Rating:



BIG GEE

The rundown: Like Jeezy, the husky-volced Big Gee established a local following in the Southern underground with his independently released *Mechanicsville, USA* in 2002.

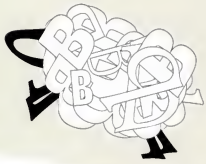
Potential: Big Gee's limited subject matter, combined with P. Diddy's half-hearted approach to music as of late, points to another possible soured Bad Boy South project.

Mark Allwood

Rating:











RUDE AWAKENING

They've survived addiction, incarceration, and media scrutiny. Now **BOBBY BROWN** and **WHITNEY HOUSTON** have put it all out there in a reality TV show. **ROB KENNER** goes behind the scenes of *Being Bobby Brown* to see how they really keep the greatest love of all alive. Photograph by Dana Lixenberg





BROWN SUGAR: "I have such great respect for their relationship," says Bethann Hardison. "There's a serious bond between them."

BOBBY BROWN IS FAST ASLEEP. Tracey Baker-Simmons and Wanda Shelley, the founding partners of B² Entertainment, are trying everything to wake him up. As executive producers of *Being Bobby Brown*—a reality show that debuted on Bravo this summer—they're experienced at handling this sort of thing. // Shelley, who left a corporate pharmaceuticals job to form B² with her homegirl Baker-Simmons, takes hold of Brown's hand, shakes it, then tries to pull him up from the couch without success. Speaking in a sweet-but-firm Chattanooga drawl, Baker-Simmons—who's produced music videos for Immature and Brandy, as well as hip hop–flavored Sprite ads—explains to Brown that a writer from VIBE has flown in from New York to watch some tape with him, maybe even conduct an interview. Unimpressed, he mumbles something, rolls over, and continues snoring. // Not half an hour ago, a Brown caravan pulled up outside B² Entertainment's headquarters, a brick house in the prosperous Buckhead section of Atlanta. Brown, his older brother and longtime manager Tommy; his gray-haired, gravelly voiced father, whom everybody calls Pops; and two pairs of energetic nieces and nephews came spilling out of shiny black vehicles. They came to check out a rough cut from *Being Bobby Brown*'s first season. // Inside the B² offices is anything but soporific, what with Tommy straining to hear (and be heard) on his cell phone, Pops pleading with his tiniest granddaughter to stop spinning in circles, and two older nephews beseeching a busy editing tech to locate—among the hundreds of hours of footage—a certain driveway basketball game. Amid all this hubbub, Brown hoists his unlaced Timberlands onto the leather couch in the editing room, stretches out, and nods off to sleep, perchance to dream.

THIS BIG SPLASHY restaurant in suburban Alpharetta, Ga., is not even 10 minutes from the Browns' home. On August 22, 2003, Bobby was arrested here at Atlantic Seafood Company for an old probation violation. A few weeks later, Baker-Simmons came to this bar and started quizzing the bartender about the restaurant's famous customers. "She drinks apple martinis," he told her. "He drinks Budweiser—and he's very mellow." That's it? Baker-Simmons wondered. No drama? "Not really," he replied.

She began putting the characters together in her head. "People think he's some criminal, and they're just a couple of drug addicts," says Baker-Simmons, who insists that, behind all the media hype, Brown and Houston are more or less "traditional African-American parents" working on their marriage and raising their kids. "I mean, people like Ozzy Osbourne now. He bit the head off of a bat. So I thought, you know, maybe there's something here for Bobby Brown." Within six months, the reality series *Being Bobby Brown* was in production.

After so many negative experiences with the media—as well as real-life problems of the sort that are better resolved in private—it may seem strange that Brown would agree to let camera crews follow his family's every move. There are the numerous arrests, including charges of wife abuse, and DUIs, as well as reports of drug abuse. Most recently, there has been more talk of infidelity via video girl groupie–turned-tell-all author Karrine Steffans's (aka Super Head) book, *Confessions of a Video Vixen*, in which she outlines her previous affair with Brown. "Our relationship didn't last long because in addition to his high-profile marriage to Whitney Houston, I also realized that there was a serious problem," she writes. "I never witnessed him using drugs but...I remember talking to him while he sat on the toilet, nodding off continually during the conversation."

> "WHEN I READ ABOUT MY DAD, I THINK IT'S FUNNY," SAYS LAPRINCIA. "THE STUFF THEY SAY IS, LIKE, TOTALLY WRONG."



EVERYDAY PEOPLE: (The Brown family, from left) Bobby Jr., Pops, LaPrincia, Bobby, Whitney, Tommy, and Bobbi Kristina.

(PREVIOUS SPREAD) STYLING BY KIM BESSONDEN. MAKEUP BY JAMILLAH "JAMI" SIMMONS, BARBER: HAKEL COOTE, (OPPOSITE PAGE) WAYNE MASKELYNE INTERNATIONAL. (THIS PAGE) T. SCOTT SOUHER



FATHER TIME: "I'm dedicated to my children, so I can call myself a black father," says Brown, here with daughter LaPrincia.

In spite of (or perhaps because of) all this unwanted attention, he made the decision to go ahead with the reality show while he was still in jail for violating his probation. Keeping it real is seldom a priority for so-called reality television, but *Being Bobby Brown* is realer than most—sometimes painfully so.

The first day of shooting was March 25, 2004, the day Brown was released from a Massachusetts jail after paying $63,500 in back child support to Kim Ward. Brown had two children with Ward before he married Houston. Nothing, he said, could be worse than people thinking he neglected his kids. "Cameras got there right after I got out of jail," Brown explains. He wanted to show that he and his family would move past that moment.

And in fact, he did. "I love my dad more than anything," Brown's 15-year-old daughter LaPrincia said to the cameras while sitting on her frilly white bedspread. "When I read about my dad in the paper, I just really think it's funny." Though LaPrincia lives with her mother, Brown still finds time to be a father to his daughter. "The stuff that they say is, like, totally wrong about him."

"I used to get so mad at some of the things I would read," says Brown, a lively and charming contrast to the man catching z's earlier. "My wife would be like, 'Don't worry about it.' But to me, this is gonna be in the archives. There's gonna be records of things that Bobby Brown did," he adds. "To me, this show was just a way of maintaining my sanity."

Now that the first season is a wrap, Baker-Simmons, Shelley, and the recurring cast—Bobby, Whitney, Pops, and Tommy, plus his then-8-year-old son, McKinley—have gathered here of all places to talk about the show.

"Have you met my wife?" asks Brown, stepping aside to introduce the tall, demure, and absolutely stunning woman who's accompanying him to Atlantic Seafood Company on this August evening. Houston's hair is cut short, raspberry highlights framing that unforgettable face. "How do you do?" she says, offering her hand, and the whole introduction suddenly seems unnecessary, even ridiculous. This is Whitney Houston we're talking about, after all. But upon further reflection, the only correct answer to Brown's question is "No, I have not."

Nor, like most people, have I met Bobby Brown, who (today at least) turns out to be utterly unlike his well-known bad-boy image. Endearing, funny, and disarmingly unassuming, he's the sort of guy who's willing to talk with just about anybody, even people who think nothing of interrupting a family meal to ask Brown and Houston for an autograph.

Brown pulls out his wife's chair and sits down next to her. While he is gallant and attentive throughout dinner, she seems restless. So from time to time he rests his hand on her shoulders and gives her neck a gentle squeeze. Houston wears a ring with an olive-size rock on her left hand. Her model physique is still very much intact after age 40. She looks much better than those emaciated pictures we've all seen broadcast and rebroadcast ad nauseum. But on this night, there is no sign of inner calm. Quiet moments are filled with activity, pounding the table with a drum roll or playing air piano.

"My wife will have the salmon with rice," Brown tells the waitress and orders himself an enormous sushi platter. "This just happens to be the place I got arrested," Brown says after politely sending his eel back to be grilled a bit more. He indicates a nearby row of booths and says, "I was sitting right back there."

"You sure were," Houston adds. "And the funny thing about it is that we knew we shouldn't have went out." At this remark, the whole table bursts out laughing.

But as they were sitting down to eat, a fellow diner was dropping dime on the couple. "Four cops came and got me, guns drawn," Brown recalls. "They said, 'Mr. Brown, can you step outside?' I was like, Sir, I'm not gonna run. This is actually for a traffic ticket. You all don't need to approach me like that. But I was calm about it. I said, Can you give me one minute and let me just take my jewelry off and have my food wrapped up and give it to my wife?"

Alpharetta police Sergeant Chris Lagerbloom's account of the arrest was much the same. He told a reporter that Bobby Brown was "as calm and cordial and professional as you could be." Mr. Brown's wife, on the other hand, was not having it. "She was outwardly frustrated," said Sgt. Lagerbloom. "She was upset. She was yelling and screaming and pointing fingers at one of our officers."

> **"I USED TO GET SO MAD AT SOME OF THE THINGS I WOULD READ," SAYS BROWN. "THIS SHOW WAS A WAY OF MAINTAINING MY SANITY."**

"They walked me out," Brown says as the sliced eel returns, and suddenly Houston seems to be reliving the moment. "I'm goin', Come on baby!" she says. "Jump in the car! Fuck it! We'll make an escape!" Bobby was surrounded by police, but Whitney was undeterred. "I was like, No! We can do it! Let's run! I was fuckin' nutso," she recalls, laughing so hard she begins coughing. "Like, Yo! We can do this! Jump in the car!"

There are a million and one questions just

CARL POSEY

begging to be asked, issues of perception and reality, courage and judgment, responsibility and even sobriety. Of one fact, however, there is no question: Whitney is down for her man to the bitter end.

"The biggest misconception is that he has influenced her badly," says Bethann Hardison, who was Houston's point person at the Click modeling agency in the early '80s, before Houston became an international music superstar. "Everyone thinks he's the reason for all the problems, and this really pisses me off. Now, this is my girl, to me, she's like my child. But I know that she's no slouch. And I know that she got involved in things before he came into her life.... I defend him to keep others from putting him so down."

When asked how he feels to be a black father figure on reality television, Brown reaches over and puts his hand on his father's shoulder. "This is a real black father figure," he says. "But we've never seen anything like that on TV."

Brown goes on, reflecting on fatherhood. "Yeah, I'm dedicated to my children. So I can call myself a black father. Very supportive of everything they do, no matter what it is. Even when they're wrong, for the most part, in my eyes, they're right because they gotta learn."

"He don't even discipline them," Houston interjects. Brown hears her but keeps going: "The only way to learn is to go through something. It's not for someone to tell you. You gotta go through the hard knocks...."

"Bobby lets the kids get away with murder," Whitney adds, playfully provoking him. "They're not scared of you. They *love* him."

"But we always seem to work it out," says Brown, reaching over to hold his wife's hand.

Suddenly, Houston becomes uncomfortable with the presence of a reporter. Brown assures her that it's okay, and she waves off offers to end the interview.

"Darling," she says, shaking her head. "I have been quoted, misquoted, misread, misled, the whole nine yards. What the fuck. All I want to do is fuckin' sing. That's all I wanna do. You know? And make people happy."

She lowers her head into her hands. Brown reaches over and puts his hand on her shoulders.

"Calm down, calm down," he says. "Take it, take it, take it...."

"My mother told me to breathe," Houston says, lifting her eyes.

"Take the breath," Brown says. "Take the

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) REX/COMBO/STARPIX; REUTERS/COMBO; BAYER-GRIFFIN

EVERY LITTLE STEP

When Bobby met Whitney, wild times followed. Here's a year-by-year look at music's version of Bonnie and Clyde.

1989

April 12: Houston and Brown meet at the Soul Train Music Awards.

1992

> July 18: Brown marries Houston at her estate in New Jersey. Wedding guests reportedly make wagers on how long the marriage will last.



1993

March 4: Houston gives birth to Bobbi Kristina, who will be their only child together.

1995

April 26: Brown is charged with aggravated assault after a disagreement with a patron inside Pleasure Island nightclub at Walt Disney World. While in custody, he urinates in a police car. (Charges are later dropped after he settles a civil suit for an undisclosed sum.)

August 18: After allegedly kicking a Los Angeles hotel security guard in the back, Brown is arrested and later pleads no contest.

September 28: A gunman opens fire outside a run-down Boston bar, killing Brown's future brother-in-law.

1996

August 17: When his black Porsche Carrera (leased to his wife) spins out of control, Brown breaks four ribs and a foot.

1998

January 29: Brown is convicted of drunk driving and ordered to spend five days in jail and undergo drug and alcohol treatment.

September 28: When Brown shows up to serve his five-day sentence, he's drunk and reportedly admits to jailers that he smoked marijuana that day. Soon after his release, a judge orders him arrested again for violating his probation.

June 21: After allegedly slapping a woman's butt at the pool of a Beverly Hills hotel, Brown is charged with sexual battery. Prosecutors later drop the case for lack of evidence.

2000

January 11: Houston is stopped in Hawaii for allegedly carrying half an ounce of marijuana in her purse (charges are later filed but eventually dismissed).

March: After a reportedly disastrous rehearsal for the Oscars, where Houston was to perform, she is replaced. Her spokespeople cite throat problems as the reason.

June 12: Brown is sentenced to 75 days in jail for violating his probation on the same Florida drunk-driving conviction.



2001

> September 7: Houston appears at a Michael Jackson tribute concert, and she's so emaciated that, reportedly, even Jackson tells her he's concerned.

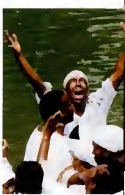
2002

August: Whitney's father, John Houston, sues her for $100 million, claiming he helped salvage her career and land the reported $100 million contract with Arista.

November 7: Brown is booked by Atlanta police for marijuana possession and various traffic charges.

2003

January 17: Brown is sentenced to jail for drunk driving.



February 2: Houston's father dies at 82. She pays her respects privately at an open casket but does not attend the funeral.

> May 29: Houston and Brown visit the River Jordan as guests of Israel's Black Hebrews.

August 27: Houston confronts officers as Brown is arrested at a seafood restaurant.

August 29: Brown pleads no contest and pays $1,450 in fines for various traffic charges and possession of less than an ounce of marijuana in Atlanta traffic court.

2004

February 27: Brown is sentenced to 60 days in jail in Atlanta for probation violations. He had been accused of five violations, including a December misdemeanor battery charge in which police said Brown hit Houston.



> March 22: Brown is released from jail to appear in a Boston-area family court on a child-support case. He subsequently spends a night in county jail and then is released after paying $63,500 in back child support to Kim Ward.

breath."

"Exhale, bitch," says Houston, commanding herself to relax. "Exhale."

A few months before this interview, Houston checked into a drug rehab facility. She would be back in rehab several months later, still searching for that elusive inner calm. She traces the troubles back to when she was working on her second motion picture, 1995's *Waiting to Exhale*. Houston remembers the shoot as a tough time. "It was shit going on," she recalls. "You know, I was a movie star. I really didn't want to be one. I was raising my daughter. I wasn't with my husband. I had to be in Phoenix. And it was like, Yo—fuck this. I don't wanna do this."

Brown listens attentively as she pours out her blues. He understands as well as anyone how success has strained their relationship. In 2007, he points out, they will mark their 15th wedding anniversary. "Still got the cake," Brown says of the top layer of their wedding cake that's been kept in the freezer at their New Jersey estate. Every time they pull out a Popsicle, those two little figures of the bride and groom stare right back at them. "It don't look like me," Brown complains with a grin. "He got a dumby, not a gumby. It's all flat on one side."

The original plan was to take out the cake and cut it to celebrate their 10th anniversary, but that year they didn't feel much like celebrating. That was the year Brown was arrested for marijuana possession, Houston gave her infamous Diane Sawyer interview, and John Houston sued his daughter for $100 million. "It was like, *Nah*…," Brown recalls. "We ain't cutting that shit."

"Twelve-year-old cake?" says Tommy aghast. "Who gonna eat that?"

"It's still the same as it was," Houston says. "It's lasted a long time. Yeah, baby. Like us."

BROWN'S TWO HOURS late for his meeting with Jheryl Busby, the MCA executive who first signed him to a solo deal. There is talk of a new album to coincide with the TV show. Baker-Simmons and Shelley's camera crew is here to document the event, and when Brown and Houston finally arrive, everything seems to go well. Busby asks Brown if he's been keeping his vocal chops tight. "I have the best vocal teacher in the world," Brown replies. "It happens to be my wife."

> **"I HAVE BEEN QUOTED, MISQUOTED, MISREAD, MISLED, THE WHOLE NINE YARDS," SAYS HOUSTON. "ALL I WANNA DO IS SING AND MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY."**

After the meeting, Mr. Busby seems cautiously optimistic. "I think we can make a great product if we just take our time and do it," he says. "I heard and saw nothing today that would make me wanna walk away. I was a little worried when the meeting kept moving back and back and back," he adds with a smile. "Bobby's still somewhat unpredictable, which is good, which is what life is. So now we just have to make a great product. I think he wants it, too, and time will tell how bad he wants it."

Months from now, there will be no deal. Brown says he'll put out the record himself. After watching VH1's *Behind the Music* episode on New Edition, he toys with the idea of reuniting with the group—which is in the midst of a lucrative comeback tour—but that doesn't happen either.

After the lights are switched off and the cameras are packed away, the sound of music floats in from the lobby outside the restaurant. Someone is playing the grand piano, and the sound is uncommonly sweet. The guests continue chatting, unaware that the woman seated on the black piano bench with her hat pulled down low is Whitney Houston. She talks quietly to herself as she caresses the chords of a tender love song, summoning keyboard skills learned on the church organ back in Newark. She says she'd like to record a gospel album "because that's where I'm from," but she knows that "Clive ain't trying to hear it." But judging by this impromptu recital, Alicia Keys is not the only Clive Davis protegé who can throw down on the ivories. "I've got more to give," Houston says later. "They just don't know it yet. I like to hold a little back."

She is so absorbed in her playing that she doesn't begin to sing until the very last line, and only then do a few hotel guests start to take notice. It's a song about instant, abiding love that Roberta Flack made famous, "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face." And before the song is over, Houston finds her voice, which is quiet and delicate at first.

"Your faaace," she sings in rising tones, piano chords gathering strength for a final flourish. There's nothing tentative about her playing now, the music flowing freely through her. She adds an effortless little riff that could break your heart. She concludes, and the last chords reverberate in the air as Houston finally exhales. *Your face*. It's a moment of gentle magic that shames the banality of this hotel lobby.

"When you're happy, everything's better," Brown later says. "When you wake up in the morning, you just feel right cause you know there's this person right next to you who you adore, who knows everything about you."

And those close to them, like Hardison, believe that Bobby and Whitney are soul mates, despite all the difficulties they've faced as a couple. "I have such great respect for their relationship," she says. "There's a serious bond between them. They have their demons. Bobby is chemically imbalanced, and Whitney is addictive. I really want them to come through the end of the tunnel completely unscathed and renewed. And to prove to the world that whatever you thought about them was not true. 'Cause they're a beacon of light. They're tough."

For Bobby Brown, their relationship is as natural as breathing. "She keeps me alive," he says, narrowing his eyes. "She keeps me alive." And there's no doubt that the reverse is also true.



MY PREROGATIVE: New Edition's Brown, before he made his 1986 solo leap.

RON WOLFSON/LANDOV FEATURES


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She wears it to raise desperately needed funds for HIV/AIDS care services, education and vaccine development. Over half a million people have chosen to wear The Bracelet. What about you? Available at: The Body Shop; Kenneth Cole; Virgin Megastore; Ben Bridge Jewelers and other fine retailers. Or to order call 1-800-88-UNTIL or visit us at WWW.UNTIL.ORG.
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THERE'S A CURE



THE CHOSEN ONE

HIS NAME RHYMES WITH OSAMA AND YO' MAMA. BUT HELL, HE'S CONQUERED WORSE OBSTACLES THAN THAT. **JAMIE KATZ** CATCHES UP WITH THE CHARISMATIC ILLINOIS SENATOR **BARACK OBAMA,** WHO'S SMITTLY REDEFINING THE MEANING OF BLACK POWER.


Ye
can!

BASKETBALL MATTERS TO BARACK OBAMA. He played for his state champion high school team, and as a teenager testing himself against older and tougher street-ball players, he learned some important lessons: "That respect came from what you did and not who your daddy was," Obama writes in his best-selling memoir, *Dreams From My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. "That you could talk stuff to rattle an opponent, but that you should shut the hell up if you couldn't back it up." After one high school game, an assistant coach muttered within earshot that their team "shouldn't have lost to a bunch of niggers." When Obama took exception, the coach tried to explain lamely that "there are black people and there are niggers." Before he walked off the court, Obama replied, "There are white folks, and then there are ignorant motherfuckers like you."

These days, Obama only gets to play every so often, his language is cleaner, and he writes that his angry retort showed "how easy it is to fall into the same sloppy thinking" as his coach. But he still knows how it feels to be the new guy in a faster, rougher game. At 44, the first-term Illinois senator has become perhaps the most powerful young black political leader in the United States. And one thing he says he's determined to avoid is the kind of ugly, one-sided, scorched-earth vituperation that often passes for public debate in our time.

During a late Friday afternoon interview in his 39th-floor Senate office in Chicago, the six-foot-three Obama, in a perfectly pressed Canali suit, still has the lean, graceful look of a player. Stepping into a conference room with a sweeping view of Lake Michigan–gray in the distance, brightening to aquamarine near the shore–he shakes hands briskly, apologizes for running late, and says, "Fire away."

Over the next few days, in different places, he'll touch on everything from hip hop and bebop to the importance of reaching out to a new generation of voters in an intelligent way. "Young people are just not going to buy into the whole rhetoric," he'll say. Unlike many a public figure today, Obama seems almost allergic to clichés, slogans, and easy formulas that divide the world into us and them. And when he talks about his own public service–and the marriage of principled advocacy and street-smart pragmatism he sees as necessary to achieve change–you sense that Obama is one of those lucky souls who has truly found his calling. "He's the genuine article," says social critic and author Michael Eric Dyson, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who has known Obama for 15 years. "He truly cares about making a better life for not only his constituency and those who are vulnerable and poor, but for all Americans who struggle."

★

ILLINOIS'S JUNIOR SENATOR is deliberately low-key in discussing his goals as a rookie on Capitol Hill. "You try to set up an office that is responsive to your constituents," Obama says, "make sure that we have high-quality staff, that we're responding to constituent requests, whether it's for help on getting their veterans benefits processed or getting a scholarship somewhere."

The unspoken mantra: Keep your head down, do your homework, acknowledge that you're only 99th out of 100 in seniority, and always remember the bread-and-butter issues voters sent you to Washington to deal with. "What folks are talking about," he says, "is how they can get a decent job, how they can get health care for their family, how young people can go to college." Obama's first Senate bill, introduced in early April, called for a nearly 26 percent increase in Pell Grants, a federal college-aid program that primarily helps families with incomes less than $40,000.

A member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama has also focused on things like how the U.S. can start bringing troops home from the Iraq War, which he opposed from the start; ending the genocide in Darfur, in the Sudan; and fighting nuclear proliferation and terrorism, a threat he brings home by asking simply, "How do we make sure that Manhattan doesn't get targeted with a dirty bomb?"

Still, no amount of modesty can calm the expectations that have sprung up around this former community activist, Harvard Law School graduate, and two-term state senator from Chicago's South Side.

It was only seven years ago that Nobel laureate Toni Morrison ironically dubbed Bill Clinton America's "first black president," adding that the humbly born, saxophone-playing, junk food–addicted Arkansas boy–



FIRED UP: "My view of America is that it's always a work in progress," says Obama, here at a Columbus, Ga., black-history breakfast in February.

(PREVIOUS PAGES) SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES; (THIS PAGE) PETE SOUZA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

then being hounded for his Oval Office sexual indiscretions—was "blacker than any actual person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime."

But ever since Obama electrified the political world with his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention and landslide election as only the third black U.S. senator since Reconstruction, the question has been persistent: When will Barack go for it? If not in 2008 (when he insists he's not a presidential candidate), then maybe four, eight, or even 12 years after that, when he would be only 59, or the same age George W. Bush is today. Call it 2020 vision.

Out in public, Obama gets superstar treatment: people shriek, beg for autographs, reach high for a snapshot on their camera phones. Bus drivers honk hello when they recognize him on a Chicago sidewalk. And the fever runs just as high in Obama's ancestral Kenya. The East African hip hop star MajiMaji, who comes from the same rural province as the Obama family, reports that parents there have started naming their children after their new American idol. People have even nicknamed a popular local brew in his honor: Instead of ordering a cold bottle of "Senator" beer, Kenyans now ask for an "Obama"—that is, "if you want to be served with a smiling face," MajiMaji says. "The African community is very proud of his achievements."

"Hey, I'm the flavor of the month," Obama tells people, waving off the fuss. "I'm so overexposed I make Paris Hilton look like a recluse," he famously quipped at a Washington dinner. White House ambitions? "That's silly talk," he told Wolf Blitzer on CNN. "Talk to my wife. She'll tell me I need to learn to just put my socks in the hamper."

★

ON THIS ICY MARCH Chicago morning, Columbus Drive is ground zero for one of the greatest outpourings of ethnic energy in America: the annual Saint Patrick's Day Parade. Not only has the Chicago River been dyed a color halfway between kelly green and Prestone antifreeze, but it appears that most of the quarter-million people of all hues converging on the parade route are festooned in green plastic leprechaun hats, green scarves, or green feather boas—with green hair, green sparkle, green *anything* to get in the spirit.



THE OBAMAS: Barack celebrates his birthday last year with wife, Michelle, and daughters, Sasha and Malia.

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES

> "IT'S NOT AN OVERSTATEMENT TO SAY THAT OBAMA'S MARRIAGE TO AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN HAS **PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE.**"

Finding Obama in the eye of this hurricane just minutes before the parade moves out seems like a daunting task. But then you notice a battery of cameras surrounding someone—and who else could it be? With his green beads and a sash inscribed "Sons & Daughters of St. Patrick," the hatless senator is clearly enjoying some old-school urban politicking. "I'm from an old Irish family," he says with smiling eyes. "The O'Bamas."

In truth, it isn't hard to find a bit of almost anything you want in Obama's ancestry. His father was "black as pitch," his mother "white as milk," he writes in *Dreams From My Father.* The late Barack Obama Sr., who came to the U.S. as an exchange student, belonged to the Luo tribe of Kenya. When Obama first visited Africa in the late '80s, an elderly relative traced the family lineage back more than a dozen generations—one of his forebears was renowned as a great leader who had helped defeat Bantu invaders centuries ago. Obama's late mother, Ann Dunham, grew up in Kansas farm country; of Scottish, English, and Cherokee descent, she had Methodists, Baptists, and Unitarians in her background. Obama's maternal family tree includes both a decorated Union Army soldier, and, it's rumored, a second cousin of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. When you add it up, including the senator's upbringing in multicultural Honolulu and the four years he spent as a boy in Indonesia attending Roman Catholic and Muslim schools, Obama begins to sound like a one-man rainbow coalition.

With his white family and his elite Ivy League education, he might have been tempted to distance himself from black life. Instead, Obama has been unequivocal about his identity as an African-American, even as he honors his mother's legacy and influence. It was she, in fact, who fed him a steady diet of black pride as a child, playing Mahalia Jackson records and the speeches of Dr. King, and inculcating a strong sense of heritage.

That Obama chose to marry the former Michelle Robinson, a working-class black woman from Chicago (who also happens to be a Harvard Law School grad) has also proved telling, especially to African-American women. "I don't think it's an overstatement to say that it has profound significance," says Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, executive director of the African American Policy Forum and a law professor at both UCLA and Columbia. "The bane of many



OUTREACH: Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. (left) greets Obama on the campaign trail.

black women's romantic hopes is that the more successful and accomplished black men are, the more likely they are to *not* choose African-American women."

★

MICHELLE OBAMA, 41, now vice president for community and external affairs at the University of Chicago Hospitals, confirms that women frequently tell her how symbolically important her marriage is to them. Not just because they're a black couple, but because she's a success in her own right, and because their family life represents the values of "folks who are raising their kids and working hard," she says. "People feel vindicated when that image gets portrayed in the media, as opposed to what we usually see."

Community and family—especially their daughters Malia, 7, and Sasha, 4—definitely help keep Obama's feet on the ground, his wife says. He still takes them to ballet class Saturday mornings, and attends every parent-teacher conference. "When he's home," Michelle says, "he usually tries to spend bath time with them, and they'll read a bedtime story, and then the ritual 'up-up'—you know, carry them to bed, tuck them in." Whenever possible, the family still attends services together at Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr.'s Trinity United Church of Christ on 95th Street. Obama still gets his weekly haircut from the same neighborhood barbershop, and if he's craving a down-home meal, he knows nothing can top the fried chicken over at MacArthur's cafeteria. Without any hesitation, Obama says, "They have the best soul food in Chicago."

★

HE MAY BE FIRMLY GROUNDED in the South Side and respectful of groundbreaking black leaders like Harold Washington and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, but Obama often insists that one can be committed to the black community without being limited to it. In fact, his views on race, power, and the limitations of identity politics are quite nuanced, as he makes clear in discussing the legacy of the black power struggles of the 1960s.

"I think the movement was important in purging, or at least counteracting, some of the self-hate that had been communicated to African-Americans in this society in all sorts of ways, from cartoons to minstrel shows to Jim Crow," he says. "But the political project of black nationalism was never as successful as the cultural project, because politics is about coalition building. It's about addition and not subtraction.

"It is important that we recognize universal truths and frame our arguments in ways that allow other people to participate," Obama says. "When Dr. King stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, he didn't say, It's a black thing, you can't understand it. He said, It's a human thing, and you *can* understand. That didn't mean he wasn't talking very specifically about the oppression of black people. What he suggested to white America was that you have a stake in this, and your ideals are violated in this process, and if you want to live in an America that makes sense for you and your children, then this is something that has to be fixed."

All politics is local, though, as the saying

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Obama is only one of a cadre of emerging politicos expanding the political discussion.

ALICIA REECE, 34, vice mayor of Cincinnati
Poll position: As the youngest woman elected to Cincinnati's City Council, the former Miss Grambling State University helped diffuse the city's bubbling racial tensions by negotiating with the Justice Department and others to combat racial profiling.
X factor: She is currently campaigning to become the city's first black female mayor.

CORY BOOKER, 36, founder and president, Newark Now
Poll position: A Yale Law alumnus, Rhodes scholar, and activist whose commitment to revitalizing Newark's inner city included moving into a local housing project.
Stacking bricks: Defeated in Newark, New Jersey's 2002 mayoral race, the former city councilman is prepping for another go at the mayorship in 2006.

REP. KENDRICK MEEK, 38 (D-Fla.)
Poll position: A former highway patrolman ascended the capitol steps after he campaigned for and won his retiring mother's (Carrie Meek) congressional seat.
Next: Looks like a good bet to run for governor or senator in the future.

REP. ARTUR DAVIS, 37 (D-Ala.)
Poll position: Propelled into office by multiracial support, the Ivy League-educated former civil rights attorney is one of a few African-American power players in the intensely race-conscious Alabama scene.
Bama-fied: He's hoping to channel support for a future gubernatorial run.

REP. HAROLD FORD JR., 35 (D-Tenn.)
Poll position: Already in his fifth term, the second-generation legislator flaunts a taste for Jay-Z and claims membership in conservative Democrats' Blue Dog Coalition.
Ford march: Ford has designs on retiring Republican Majority Leader Bill Frist's coveted senate seat in the 2006 election.

REP. JESSE JACKSON JR., 40 (D-Ill.)
Poll position: With a decade on the hill, the son of the famed civil rights leader has become a vocal member of the Congressional Black Caucus. He's also a dogged opponent of the death penalty, coauthoring *Legal Lynching: The Death Penalty and America's Future* in 2001.
Hope alive: Jr. has obliquely hinted at his senatorial aspirations. *Jalylah Burrell*

TIM BOYLE/GETTY IMAGES

goes. And the people who have the most hope invested in Obama will be watching carefully to see if his heart remains with his core constituencies. "It comes down to the old Tennessee expression," Dyson says. "Dance with the ones that brung you."

So far, Obama has been conspicuously heeding that advice. For example, although hundreds of schools asked him to speak at commencement this year (and he would surely have been welcomed ecstatically by his own alma maters—Harvard, Columbia, and the Punahou School in Honolulu), Obama addressed only three ceremonies, all in-state: Knox College in Galesburg (a onetime anti-slavery hotbed that also awarded an honorary degree to an earlier Illinois politician named Lincoln in 1860); the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine (he taught law at the university until recently); and finally, John Hope College Preparatory High School, a magnet school on the South Side with a 100 percent minority enrollment. "Eighty percent of them will be going on to college," says Dr. Mahalia A. Hines, the school's principal.

As proud as she is of her students and their guest speaker, Dr. Hines may be even prouder of her son, Lonnie Rashid Lynn—better known as the rapper Common—whose latest album, *Be*, is running neck-and-neck with Obama for Chi-town love. Common has become one of the senator's leading supporters in the hip hop community. "I love his intelligence, his charisma, his message, and his effort—man, this dude is what we need in the world," he says. "He's one person who can move the crowd. Hip hop cats respect him."

Obama returns the compliment, praising Common as a "very conscious, thoughtful" artist; he also admires Spearhead and Arrested Development. But Obama's own musical tastes run more to classic R&B and neo soul (Stevie Wonder, Jill Scott). Friends even tease him about some of the CDs in his trunk. "West Javanese flute music, old blues, Taj Mahal, Dionne Warwick, Gil Scott-Heron," he says, ticking off some of his favorites. "And I'm a big jazz fan. I love Coltrane and Miles."

Obama uses an old jazz term to describe what rankles him about a lot of commercial hip hop. "The underlying values are so *square*," he says. "It's about bling. It's entirely cynical, entirely materialistic." He also has little patience for those who glorify guns and drugs, and rejects misogyny, gay bashing, and what he sees as contempt for the weak. "A lot of hip hop doesn't challenge the social order at all," he says. "It's not saying that your measure as a man is how you respect people and help people, but rather how you put them down."

Still, Obama admires the music's spirit of defiance and survival. "Some of the creativity and power of hip hop comes from the assertion that *we're still here*," he says. "Don't forget us. We may have been born into circumstances that are impossible, and yet we're here, we're still possible. That's a powerful statement in and of itself."

When Obama declared in his keynote speech, "There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America," he flat-out thrilled many Americans who want to put the nightmare of racism behind them, and for whom Obama embodies that dream. But how does that statement jibe with the painful realities of racial inequality he also speaks about with eloquence and passion? Back in his Chicago office, Obama considers the question. "My view of America is that it's always a work in progress," he says. "What I was speaking to was the aspiration of America, the ideal. I'm not talking about us ignoring racism, poverty, or the disparities in opportunity in our society, but rather saying that we are bound together, and to the extent that we recognize that, there's the possibility of closing the gap between the ideal and the reality."

★

LATE AT NIGHT IN Washington, D.C., Obama confides, he'll sometimes wander over to the Lincoln Memorial by himself and just take it all in. Though he's the nation's highest-ranking black elected official, for a few minutes, he might as well be a high school kid feeling the power of history for the first time, reading the Gettysburg Address and Lincoln's Second Inaugural chiseled into the marble walls, commemorating a struggle that cost more than a half-million American lives. Looking out toward the National Mall, he can see the new World War II Memorial. From those steps, the view toward the Capitol building two miles away is essentially the same one Dr. King commanded in 1963, when he challenged the nation to redeem its own promise and achieve justice for all—to "transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

Standing in that place makes him think about all the people who sacrificed for freedom—from Lincoln to D-Day to Dr. King. "It moves me deeply," Obama says. "It still gives me the chills." V

"I LOVE HIS INTELLIGENCE, HIS MESSAGE, AND HIS EFFORT," SAYS COMMON. "MAN, THIS DUDE IS WHAT WE NEED IN THE WORLD."

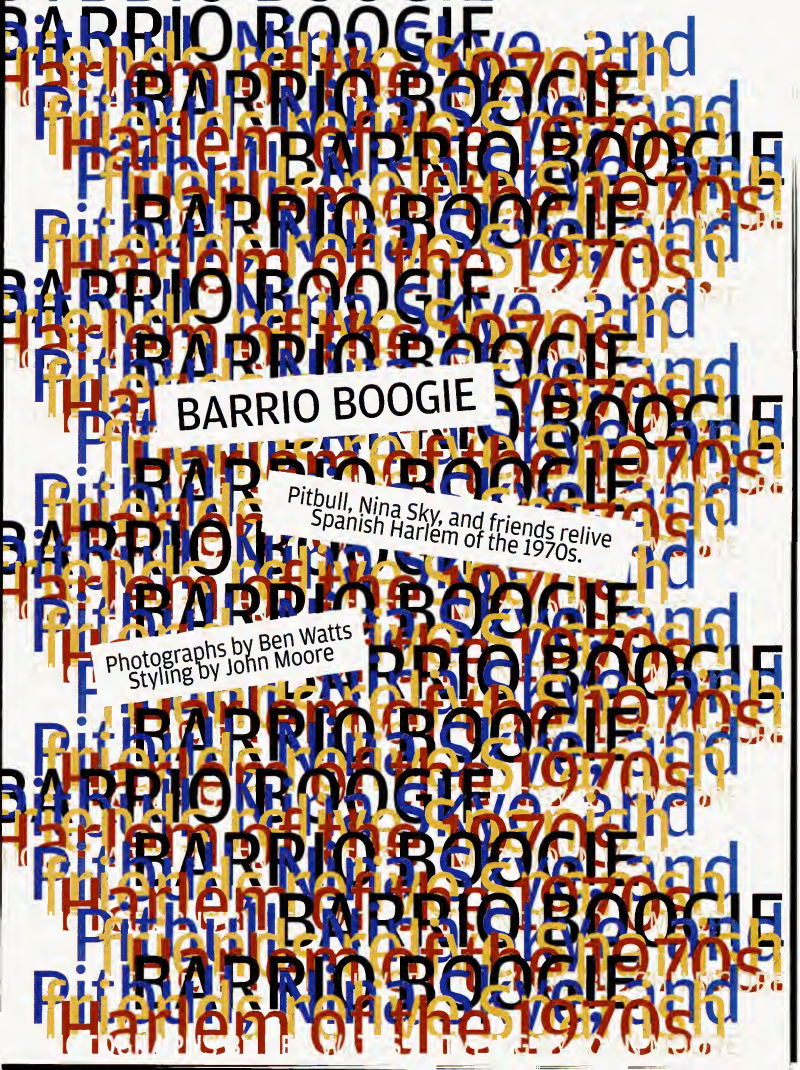


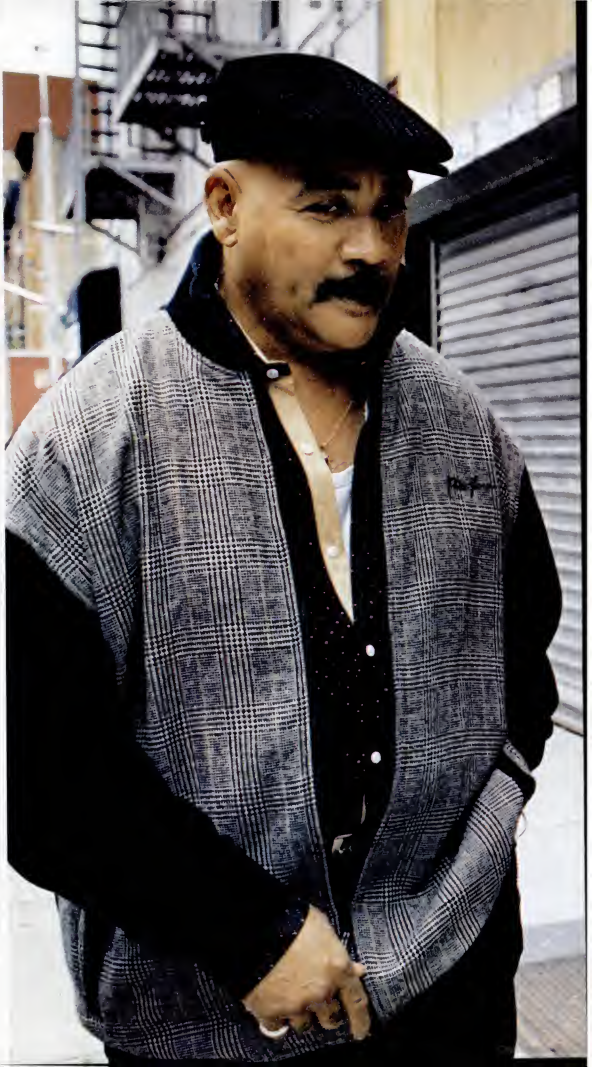
SCHOOL DAYS: Obama at Harvard, where he became the first African-American president of the school's prestigious Law Review.

STEVE LISS/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



Suit and dress shirt, all by **Versace;** satin tie by **Michael Kors;** hat by **Dior Homme by Hedi Slimane;** pocket square by **Hermès.**


BARRIO BOOGIE
Pitbull, Nina Sky, and friends relive Spanish Harlem of the 1970s.
Photographs by Ben Watts
Styling by John Moore



(From left) Tweed jacket, polka-dot button-down shirt and pants, all by **Phat Farm;** plaid cap by **Philip Treacy;** ring by **Marisa Perry.** Leather jacket by **Maison Martin Margiela Line '14';** paisley button-down shirt and tie, both by **Prada;** corduroy pants by **Agnès B;** tweed cap by **Philip Treacy;** striped looper belt by **American Eagle Outfitters;** ring by **Marisa Perry.**


LOW
PRICES
EXPERT
TV RADIO
REPAIRING


Watch: Wheel of Time by Louis Vuitton; gold necklace by Miu Miu; gold chain and diamond pendant necklace by Agatha Paris; patent shoes by Prada
Beauty Notes: For a natural scent with pepper, bergamot, and green hedgerow, try Safari eau parfumée on the wrist.



Velvet blazer by **Gucci**; print button-down shirt by **Sébastien Meunier**; white framed sunglasses by **YSL**.

Grooming Notes: For soft and manageable hair, try African Pride Gro Fast Moisturizer.



Houndstooth button-front sweater with stripes by **Moschino;** wool lapel vest by **Kris Van Assche;** jean-fit trousers by **Neil Barrett;** patent leather and velvet dress shoes by **Louis Vuitton.** Pinstriped suit, button-down shirt, and leather lace-up shoes, all by **Jil Sander.**



Suit by **Dior Homme** by **Hedi Slimane;** striped dress shirt and bow tie by **Givenchy;** rings by **Marisa Perry.**

Grooming Note: Spritz on Armani Black Code for a seductive blend of Mediterranean and lemon notes.



Striped cardigan with logo by **Marc by Marc Jacobs;** polo shirt by **G Unit;** corduroy slacks by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren;** patterned cashmere cap by **EK** by **New Era;** striped cashmere scarf by **Marc Jacobs;** sneakers by **Converse.** Knit cable cashmere sweater by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren;** print shirt by **Hussein Chalayan;** black slacks by **Miu Miu;** cap by **Arnold Hatters;** loafers by **Prada.**



(From left) Suede and knit jacket by **Salvatore Ferragamo;** print button-down shirt by **Moschino Uomo;** corduroy pants by **Paul Smith;** suede wallabees by **Clarks.** Pinstriped suit and button-down shirt by **Jil Sander;** sunglasses by **Gucci.** Houndstooth button-front sweater with stripes by **Moschino;** vest by **Kris Van Assche;** navy trousers with zip pockets by **Neil Barrett;** patent leather and velvet dress shoes by **Louis Vuitton.** Corduroy jacket by **A.P.C.;** button-down wool shirt by **Ennio Capasa** for **Costume National Homme;** plaid vest by **Paul Smith;** jeans by **Just Cavalli;** suede loafers by **Clarks.**



Tweed top with multicolor buttons by **Moschino;** metallic knit sweater by **Bebe;** gold funnel skirt by **Matthew Williamson;** necklace available at **Aaron Faber Gallery;** fur, suede shorts by **Derman,** paisley blazer by **D&G,** ruffled shirt and pocket scarf, both by **John Varvatos;** tuxedo-stripe pleated pants by **Michael Kors;** belt, high socks by **B. Tetzlaf.**



Print button-down shirt by **Miu Miu;** V-neck sweater vest by **Dior Homme** by **Hedi Slimane;** cap by **Capas.**


Velvet blazer by Dsquared2;
striped dress shirt by Polo
Ralph Lauren; wool pants by
A.P.C.; watch and ring, both
available at Aaron Faber
Gallery; velvet patterned
loafers by Sergio Rossi.



ool jacket by **Gi**
striped sweater by **Marc Jacobs**; gingham shirt and silk tie, both by **Dries Van Noten**; pants by **Al Sardar**; Dutch wax-print blazer dress with ruffle skirt by **Marc Jacobs**; knee-high **Zo Erocia**; suede pumps by **Mary Minko**. **Facial.** Sequined top by **Prada**; tan silk organza by **Dolce & Gabbana**; gray wool by **D.A.S. Grant**; gold chain **Kendra Scott**; patterned ring by **Lee Angel**; leather bracelet with **Alunabeth**.


TEL 212-534-7090



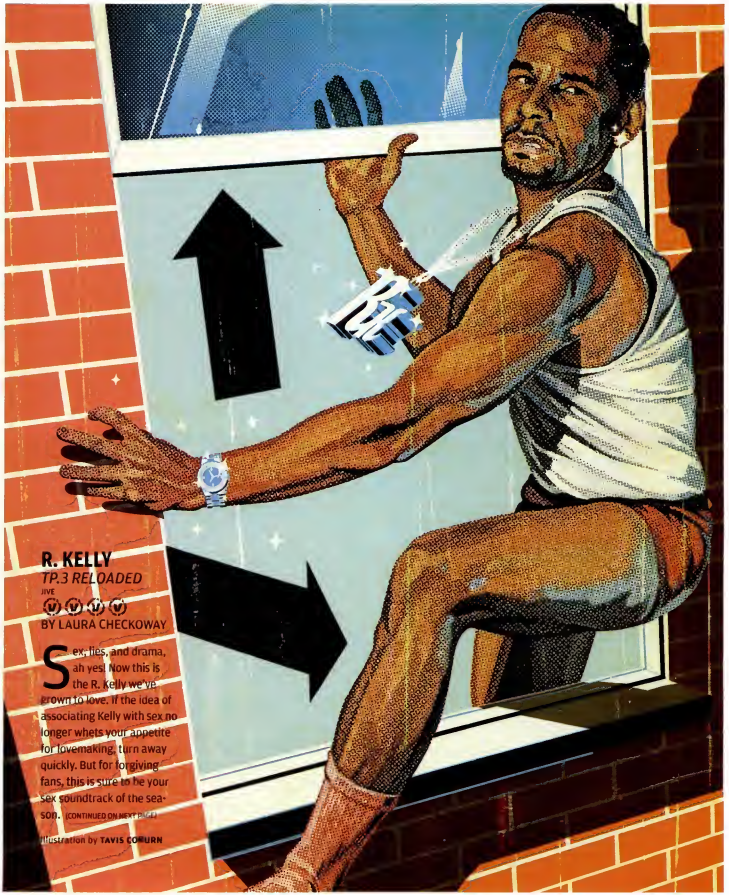
(From left) White tuxedo jacket and button-down shirt by **Dolce & Gabbana;** vintage bow tie. Knit sweater by **Dolce & Gabbana;** vintage ribbon and lace dress. Suit by **Just Cavalli;** shirt by **Spencer Hart;** pocket square by **Hermès;** hat with ribbon detail by **Borsalino.**
See THE DETAILS, page 240.

FEATURE STYLIST: COSIMA MARIA. HAIR: LEAH LEMON FOR OSI ARTISTS. MAKEUP: ANGELA DIMARIO FOR CLOUTIER ARTISTS. STYLING BY RACHEL DAWES FOR CATWALK ARTISTS. SHOES BY NATALIE JOOD FOR SEE BY NATALIE JOOD. SHOT ON LOCATION IN NEW YORK. PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: ANDREA ATKINSON.

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REVOLUTIONS



R. KELLY
TP.3 RELOADED
JIVE
BY LAURA CHECKOWAY

Sex, lies, and drama, ah yes! Now this is the R. Kelly we've grown to love. If the idea of associating Kelly with sex no longer whets your appetite for lovemaking, turn away quickly. But for forgiving fans, this is sure to be your sex soundtrack of the season. [CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

Illustration by TAVIS COBURN

After steppin' in to a gleeful, gospel-influenced world, the Chi-town mastermind is back to his old scandalous ways with *TP.3 Reloaded*.

While the content is strictly sex obsessed, the range of musical styles here is as varied and satisfying as the many positions and places the album will take you. Certainly, a postsex-tape R. Kelly is a guilty pleasure for any listener, but his triumphant return to the morally conflicted, R&B-thug gentleman who seduces you into forgiveness, that's irresistible.

Reloaded finds Kelly serving up his erotic brand of music in places others won't dare. While the adulterous saga "Trapped in the Closet" captivates listeners with its shocking twists, the mid-tempo "In the Kitchen" feeds us a succulent fantasy. As only Kelly can, he sets the mood in the bedroom with the metaphoric groove "Remote Control." Channeling Prince's falsetto, Kelly puts himself in a woman's hand, promising to "Make your body come like three or four times in a row."

Despite his prowess in the bedroom (and kitchen), Kelly's not as effective in the club with his formulaic lead single, "Playa's Only," featuring the Game. While the G Unot rapper is less than impressive spitting lyrics recycled from his endemic hit "How We Do"—"Still in the hood one hand on my gun / And my trigger finger still make bitches come"—Kelly plays up his mackling persona in a generic way. On the flip side, hometown homie Twista is never one to half-step on a cameo, adding his signature oomph to the racy mid-tempo tune "Hit It til the Mornin'."

Clearly, Kelly knows how to keep it hot on those cold Chicago nights, but when he transports his 12 Play to the islands, the temperature reaches a record high. Flexing his swaying tenor over the sparse island rhythms of "Slow Wind," Kelly coaxes a Jamaican queen to wind her body for an American king. Just as enticing is the roof-raising reggaeton banger "Burn It Up," which hits its mark with the help of reggaeton sensations Wisin and Yandell. Although the bouncing bass line of "Reggae Bump Bump," featuring Elephant Man, is sure to make a few booties "Go bump bump," it's otherwise skipable.

Kelly remains in a class by himself.

Remaining in a class by himself, Kelly runs up against the recent successes of R&B studs Usher and John Legend—and wins. Even if the straightforward, radio-ready "Kickin' It With Your Girlfriend" sounds more like an Usher hit than signature Kelly, the R's confessions of infidelity seem more convincing in their frankness ("Truth is that we don't even regret it"). While the introspective piano-man Legend nabbed Snoop Dogg to help him change his cheating ways, Kelly has Snoop riding shotgun for a pimped-out excursion through a player's paradise on "Happy Summertime." And the back-bending ballad "Sex Weed" will no doubt get you lifted after one potent toke.

Sure, there are a few more ways of having your R&B served nowadays, but R. Kelly is still the best at getting the job done. *TP.3* proves that his magical libido still has the power to orchestrate legendary lust-making tunes.

STAMP OF APPROVAL

CERTIFIED...

CLASSIC Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ

SUPERIOR Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ

HEAT Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ

SUSPECT Ⓥ Ⓥ

FRISBEE Ⓥ

MISSY ELLIOTT
THE COOKBOOK

ATLANTIC

Ⓥ Ⓥ Ⓥ

Even when her experiments backfire, she still works it.

One thing about Missy Elliott—you have to give her credit for being unique. Her sixth album, *The Cookbook*, roves wildly from childlike adventures in noise to futuristic fusions that re-imagine what hip hop can be. While a few of these efforts fail in the funk department, the album never sounds derivative.

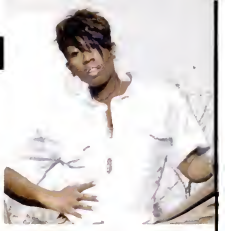
On "Joy," featuring Mike Jones, Timbaland combines breathing noises and vinyl static sounds while Elliott recalls the innocent braggadocio of late '80s rap. Slick Rick makes a forgettable cameo on "Irresistible Delicious," an ode to booty and freaking, while the syrupy R&B hook seems disjointed. And Rick isn't the only disappointing guest at the party: Grand Puba mumbles his way through a verse on "My Struggles" (a song which also features an ineffective Mary J. Blige—rapping).

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Speaking of cooking, Missy's favorite food is Oodles of Noodles.

But even if the queen of hip hop soul can't rock the mike, Elliott proves she can handle herself beautifully as a diva. On the album's most striking moment, "Teary Eyed," she injects gospel into a song that draws equally on R&B and New Orleans marching music. Yep, leave it to Missy to add every ingredient into her melting pot.

Dimitri Ehrlich



FREE AGENT
VIBE's unsigned draft pick

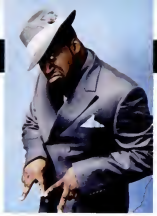


> NAME: Mavelle (née Lindsay N. Gilbert)
> AGE: 23
> HOMETOWN: Marlborough, Conn.
> GENRE: R&B
> FAVE ALBUM: *112*, 112
> DREAM COLLABO: Dr. Dre

As a teen, the only thing that kept Mavelle out of the principal's office was music. And when Mavelle's gentle voice impressed the audience at a high school talent show in 1999, everything changed. True to her roots, she adopted her stage name and enrolled in the Hartford Conservatory. "This is not necessarily what a white girl would be singing," says Mavelle, "but this is my music, too." Her album, *Off the Record*, recalls early '90s R&B while mixing in some modern sounds like crunk-and-B. Indeed, not many songbirds write, arrange, produce, and mix their own material during the day and then work the FedEx graveyard shift. "I had all these dreams back then," she says, referring to her rocky adolescence. "Now I'm trying to make them happen." And that certainly beats detention.

Angie Romero

> BE THE JUDGE: Hear tracks at *vibe.com*.



DAVID BANNER
CERTIFIED
UNIVERSAL

Mississippi's native son creates his own lane.

As a hip hop artist with rock and country leanings, David Banner is a one-man mash-up artist. And the Mississippi MC/producer skillfully blends those genres–along with some Bible Belt political musings–in *Certified*.

Banner's use of guitars is generally masterful, as on the title track where the chugging riff makes it sound unlike anything else in hip hop. Backed by an acoustic six-string, he is provocative and moving on "My Life." On the other hand, "Crossroads" is bogged down by feedback.

Meanwhile, the Mr. Collipark–assisted "Play," with its explicit come-ons and hushed vocals, travels the well-worn territory previously trod by the Ying Yang Twins' recent hit "Wait (The Whisper Song)." Elsewhere, Banner explores his libido to great effect: The aptly titled "Fucking," with its sharp Jazze Pha production, is one of the album's highlights.

When at his best, Banner creates powerful American folk music. Few MCs can express the plight of the underprivileged as bluntly as Banner does on "Lost Souls," where he attacks the former Senator often accused of racism: "Fuck Trent Lott!" he screams. Now that's a true filibussa'.

Thomas Golianopoulos

EXTRA! EXTRA!
Only 17 of the 56 songs Banner recorded made *Certified*.

BOOMSHOTS
Reggae Riddims & Reality BY ROB KENNER

High above Jamaica's south coast an electrical storm is raging, but you can still see the stars. On the opening night of the **CALABASH INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL,** a constellation of terrestrial stars (Amiri Baraka, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Mutabaruka) is taking shape to celebrate the art of storytelling. A bonfire blazes on the beach, where the night culminates in a screening of *The Harder They Come* (popcorn not included). A magic light flickers on-screen, and Jimmy Cliff is a young man again, singing, "You Can Get It If You Really Want" like he still believes it. By the time his character, Ivan, reaches his rude boy apogee–with his snakeskin boots, dark glasses, and .38 revolvers–the capacity crowd is enthralled by the 1972 masterpiece.



Directed and cowritten by Perry Henzell, *The Harder They Come* introduced the rest of the world to Jamaican street life and the cultural roots of reggae music. "It's the first reggae film, and it has also proven to be somewhat prophetic," explains novelist Colin Channer, who is Calabash's founder and artistic director. Especially in a year when Jamaica has already suffered 600 murders, the tragic tale of a gentle country boy turned desperate killer by the pressures of city life could not be more topical. "Until you start spreading the wealth, we're gonna have more youths like Ivan," adds Cliff, whose lyrics were celebrated at Calabash.

Still as powerful as the day it premiered at the Carib Cinema in Kingston, *The Harder They Come* remains the blueprint for dancehall flicks like the 2002 street classic *Shottas*, which starred Spragga Benz and Kymani Marley. As with *Hustle & Flow*, when a downpressed subculture reaches the big screen, the appeal can be irresistible to insiders and outsiders alike.

With sequels to *Shottas* and *The Harder They Come* currently in the works, let's hope they also bring what dancehall truly needs: screenwriters with enough *overstanding* to tell these stories from fresh perspectives. "Our movie industry is often reduced to location scouting, then somebody else is brought in to tell the story," says Channer. "Our key purpose is to outfit kids in Jamaica to be the storytellers of the future." As Peter Tosh and Bob Marley once said, half the story has never been told.

HEAVY ROTATION
SHAGGY *Clothes Drop* (Geffen)
MORGAN HERITAGE *Full Circle* (VP)
WILLIE NELSON *Countryman* (Lost Highway)
TONY CURTIS *Ready for the World* (VP)
VARIOUS ARTISTS *Reggae Gold 2005* (VP)

MILESTONES
Five albums that changed CASSIDY'S life.



WILLIAMS: JEFF VESPA/PHOTOMAKE

> **2PAC, *ALL EYEZ ON ME*** (Death Row, 1996) I wasn't always a 'Pac fan. I started relating to his music as I got older and went through stuff that he was talking about.

> **MASE, *HARLEM WORLD*** (Bad Boy, 1997) I like females, and I like to floss. Mase was representing that type of cat, so I was feeling this. Bad Boy had it on smash.

> **JAY-Z, *IN MY LIFETIME, VOL. 1*** (Roc-A-Fella, 1997) He formulated it right. How the songs led in to each other, it seemed like it was just one story.

> **THE NOTORIOUS B.I.G., *LIFE AFTER DEATH*** (Bad Boy, 1997) When I was younger, I wasn't focusing on the art of rap. But when he came with this, it made me want to come up with classics.

> **THE LOX, *WE ARE THE STREETS*** (Ruff Ryders, 2000) Swizz Beatz did some of my favorite beats ever on this. It didn't move millions of units, but it was one of the hardest albums.

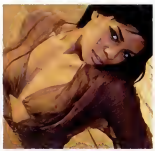
HEAR THIS!



"'Faithful' is like a smooth '70s song, and 'The Corner' has that hard-core beat I crave. It's timeless." MALINDA WILLIAMS, star of *My Life in Idlewild*, on COMMON'S *BE*.

SYLEENA JOHNSON
CHAPTER 3: THE FLESH
JIVE

There's something soulful blowing in the Chicago wind.



With R&B often leaning toward the blues, Syleena Johnson's voice rings true on this joyful collection of love anthems. The Chicago artist's third offering finds her in heavy-hitting hometown company. Johnson creates a Chi-town stepper's classic with R. Kelly on "Special Occasion," conjuring images of a couple celebrating on the dance floor. "Hypnotic" is an intoxicating club joint with Kelly and Fabolous, on which Johnson's strong, throaty vocals ride Kelly's head-bobbing beat. The Kanye West–produced "Bulls Eye" aims straight for the heart, with Common delivering a verse about relationships and growth. Twista spits quick opening lines before Johnson aurally oozes over the freaky down-tempo "Phone Sex."

Johnson also shines when she ventures outside the Windy City. Jermaine Dupri joins her for the summery "Classic Love Song," while "More," with Anthony Hamilton, is equally sunny and sweet. Aside from jilted-themed tracks like "Leave Me Alone" and "Apartment 4 Rent," this album is an upbeat reminder that, although it may hurt, love can still feel–and sound–brand-new.

Laura Checkoway

EXTRA! EXTRA!

Syleena's father is '60s R&B/blues singer Sly Johnson.


Jim Jones

JIM JONES
HARLEM: THE DIARY OF A SUMMER
KOCH

The Dipset capo favors breezy, bass-heavy beats instead of chipmunked soul samples to celebrate the 'hood's favorite season. This new sonic direction can be heard on songs like the smooth "Summer Wit Miami" and the hometown ode "Harlem (Strutting Thru Harlem)." But this is no crossover music. Even with R&B-sounding production, Jones keeps it gangsta, especially on more sinister songs like the menacing "Penitentiary Chances," featuring crewmate Hell Rell. Unlike Jones's disjointed debut, *Harlem* has a cohesive and consistent sound minus the unnecessary cameos. This is summer rider music at its best–a hot and reckless journey.

Donnie Kwak

BUCKSHOT & 9TH WONDER
CHEMISTRY
DUCK DOWN

On their first collaboration, Black Moon's front man and Little Brother's boardman experiment with a simple yet effective beats-and-rhymes compound. As rap vet Buck deftly rides 9th's boom-bap, he makes keen observations about gossipmongers ("Side Talk"); the here-today-gone-tomorrow music industry ("Slippin'"); and breadwinning in the urban jungle ("The Ghetto"). On "Food for Thought," he cleverly layers his rhymes and asks, "Damn, can I get a piece of bread / Without somebody in the street tryin' to eat what I said?" It's that hunger that makes *Chemistry* bubble from the beaker to the speakers.

Justin Monroe

CUBAN LINK
CHAIN REACTION
M.O.B.

Withstanding Big Pun's immense shadow and Fat Joe's verbal wrath, Cuban Link shines with introspection on his first solo release. *Chain Reaction* finds the former TS member cleverly moving from the streets ("Talk About It") to the sheets ("My Lady"). Whether spitting alongside Avant's crooning or Jadakiss's rough rhymes, Cuban adapts to each track, especially the grimier ones. "I've been gone for a minute / Niggas thought I was finished," he raps on "Tonight's the Night," "But the scars that I caught just added more to the image." And that's how he stays a cut above.

Jayson Rodriguez

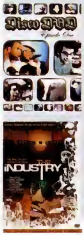

Cuban Link

BLOCK BUSTERS
Zooming in on the latest music DVDs



PUBLIC ENEMY—IT TAKES A NATION: THE FIRST LONDON INVASION TOUR 1987
(Slamjamz)

REW: Chuck D engaging the English audience through call-and-response political discourse.
FF: Mista Chuck and Professor Griff discussing American public policy with a dreary British journalist.



DISCO DVD: EPISODE ONE (Disco D Productions)

REW: Producer Disco D's exclusive footage of G Unit members performing during *The Massacre* release party at 50 Cent's Connecticut mansion.
FF: Former Da Band member Sara Stokes and her husband appear way too often.

THE INDUSTRY (Image Entertainment)

REW: Chingy praising Chaka Zulu, his then manager–just months before Ching-a-ling's falling out with Ludacris and Zulu.
FF: The anti-industry stance on labels being out only for money becomes a little heavy handed; business is business.

Jayson Rodriguez

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CHECK THE RÉSUMÉ
Producers tell how they work the hits.





VIEW FROM THE TOP:
Harrison makes it hot.

Funky Drummer

RICH HARRISON always gets it right.

When Rich Harrison is in his zone, he creates music that shakes not only asses but the world. Raised on go-go, the 29-year-old Maryland native majored in history at Howard University before deciding to become a producer in 1998. By '99, he'd recorded with Mary J. Blige. The following year, he had Amerie auditioning for him in a McDonald's parking lot. Soon after, they began recording her debut, *All I Have*, in his grandfather's basement. From Christina Milian to Destiny's Child to the Gap's '04 and '05 holiday commercials, Harrison makes tunes that stick in our heads. And without him, we may not have Beyoncé's booty dance, so show respect where it's due.

> MARY J. BLIGE—"BEAUTIFUL ONES"
I did this track when I first started and didn't own any equipment. My best friend gave me the keys to his place and told me to be out by the time he got home. I was in awe when I first met Mary. I tried to stay out of her way, but she would come and sit next to me, just doing things she didn't have to do. She even shared a fish sandwich with my ass. A year after I decided to be a producer, my Mary record was out. I was like, Holy shit, I made this in my buddy's apartment.

> AMERIE—"1 THING"
If you asked me to play my favorite Amerie record from the first album, I would have trouble remembering it. All I know is that I sit down, mess around, and before I know it, I got a record. I honestly just blank out, and I have to be totally alone. Sony hated "1 Thing," but I knew it would be a monster. It was energy- and beat-driven, and I had never done anything like that for Amerie, but I wanted to give it to her.

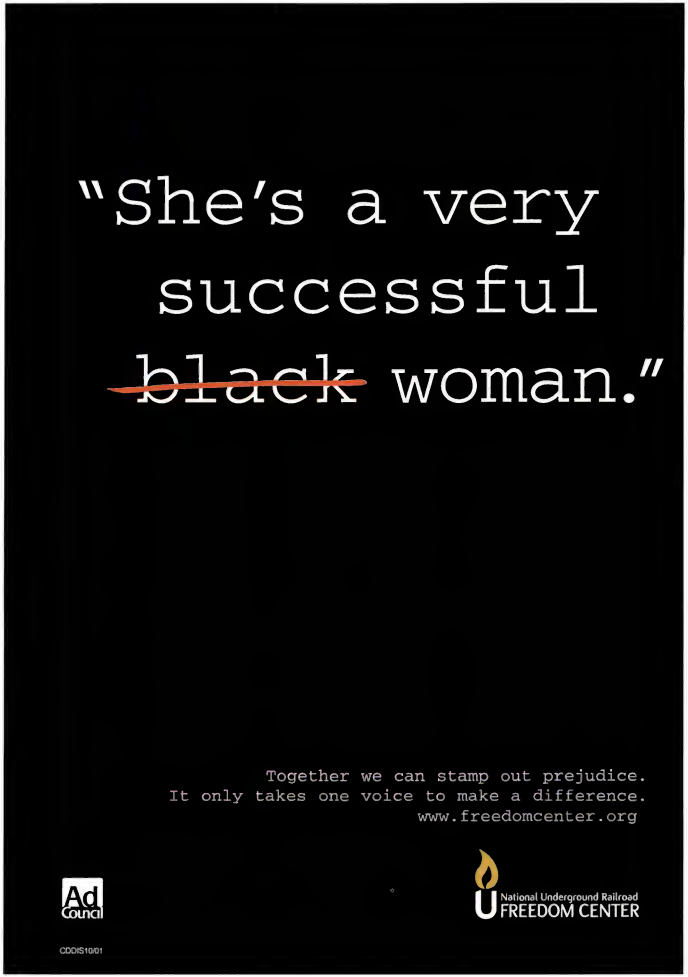
> BEYONCÉ—"CRAZY IN LOVE," FEATURING JAY-Z
I remember digging up the sample and thinking the horn blast was corny. This was a beat that nobody liked. I sent it to a few big people before it got to B. At the time, everybody was adamant that Beyoncé write the song. The night before we recorded it, I'm out drinking Patrón, thinking B gonna write. I come to the studio two hours late the next day, crazy hung over, and B's like, "It's cool, I want you to write this." I'm panicking in the studio, and the engineer's laughing at me because he knew I'd had a wild night. I just wrote, and it came out. God was ridin'.

> JENNIFER LOPEZ—"GET RIGHT"
Me and Marc Anthony got into it because I said, Nah, one more time, to Jennifer when we were recording. He stepped to me during the session and said, "Don't say, 'Nah.'" I was like, Dog, are you kidding me? I didn't even understand. But that's his wife, and he felt like something was said that should've been put a different way. I can dig it...I guess.

> USHER—"TAKE YOUR HAND"
Usher's an artist who has a lot of respect for the history of black music. I purposely wrote the song in a higher key because I wanted Usher to push a performance. And it came out sounding like a young James Brown in some parts. If I was like, No, Usher, don't do that. He'd be like, "Okay, you owe me one." Then down the line, he'd be like, "Rich, I wanna put this here. Remember man, you owe me one!" We had a creative barter system of battles that we would pick.

Laura Checkoway

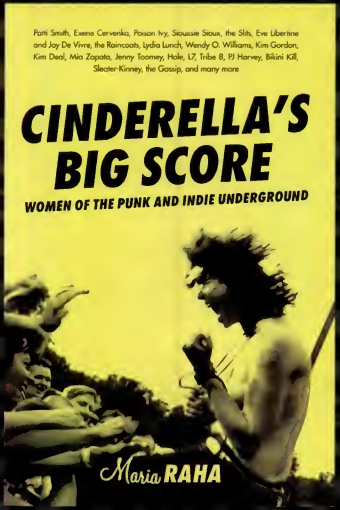
ASTRID STAWIARZ


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Babyface

BABYFACE
GROWN & SEXY
ARISTA

(V)(V)½

With a title like *Grown & Sexy*, expectations for Babyface's ninth album run high among the older set. The veteran singer/songwriter, who has racked an impressive R&B catalog, fails to innovate, though. It's certainly easy to appreciate the crooner's maturity and supple voice on tracks like "Sorry for the Stupid Things." But one can also mistake the song—with its sluggish tempo and instrumental minimalism—for any other on the album. With little evolution, and the *sexy* part left back somewhere in the '90s, *Grown* feels more like an extended elevator ride than a true adult movement. *Angie Romero*

VARIOUS ARTISTS
RUFF RYDERS VOL. 4: REDEMPTION
ARTEMIS

(V)(V)(V)

Dubbed *Ruff Ryders Vol. 4: Redemption*, this Double R edition still comes equipped with the heavily synthesized, pile-driving sound we've grown used to. A hefty infusion of new blood, like songstress Aja Smith and rapper Flashy, however, points to a changing of the guard. Where the originators, like DMX ("Funk Shit") and Jadakiss ("If It's Beef..."), provide steady efforts, newcomers like the slick Cali sensation Kartoon ("Blood in the Streets") and reggaeton MC Pirate ("Dame Reggaeton") show hope for the future. Now it's a matter of tweaking what's under the hood to achieve a better performing ride. *Jozen Cummings*

BOW WOW
WANTED
SONY URBAN

(V)(V)½

On *Wanted*, Bow Wow gives his adolescent fans just a taste of the puppy love anthems they crave. With its singsongy hook and underlying baby rattle, "Let Me Hold You," featuring Omarion, is undeniably catchy. Unfortunately, it's only one of two fleeting moments on the album—the other is "Like You," a mini "'03 Bonnie & Clyde"–like lullaby featuring Ciara—that hearkens back to Bow Wow's golden pre-pubescence. The rest of *Wanted* finds him struggling to carve his niche as a grown rapper minus the Bow Wow bounce. This dog is most endearing when he sticks to his old tricks. *A.R.*


Bow Wow

INDIE BEAT
Underdogs sound off



> **J-LIVE, *THE HEAR AFTER*** **(Penalty)** Who needs great hooks when you can rap with the momentum and intelligence of this N.Y.-born, Philly-via-New York MC. On his third full-length offering, J-Live incorporates record-scratching and live instrumentation with a subject matter that ranges from cautionary street tales to hip hop current affairs.



> **TWIP, *LOUDER THAN WORDS*** **(Iced)** Seismic drums, singsongy vocal choruses, and contributions from Lil Jon, Lil' Flip, and producer Megahertz boost the crunk meter on the club-oriented debut from this burgeoning North Carolinian rapper. On *Louder*, the charismatic MC touches everything between strip-club tipping and Dirty South living.



> **KICE OF COURSE, *NEW EXPERIENCE*** **(Smacks)** An associate of Company Flow alumnus Mr. Len, the husky-voiced MC reflects on growing up in his Jersey 'hood over a soundtrack that wavers between East Coast griminess and West Coast soul.



> **NUWAMBA, *ABOVE THE WATER*** **(Bornsoulful)** The neo-soulster from Fort Worth, Texas, crafts easy-listening grooves about falling in lust and working hard for your baby with calming keys, jazzy horns, and lulling bass. Nuwamba nestles the essence of love in a blanket of soothing tunes.

Andrew Simon

LAB NOTES
Who's doing what with whom in the studio?



Mary J. Blige

Hol' up! All you doe-eyed R&B darlings. The Queen is back. Hate it or love it, her highness **Mary J. Blige** has enlisted the help of **Dr. Dre, Dre & Vidal,** and **Raphael Saadiq** to secure her reign at the top. Meanwhile, on the gentlemen's side of things, lover man **Avant** is crafting another sexy soundtrack with the aid of **Rodney Jerkins, Jermaine Dupri, Sha Money XL,** and the **Underdogs.** And here's one that will throw you for a loop: Forgotten R&B crooner **Jimmy Cozier** is linking up with reggae big-timers **Beres Hammond, Bobby Digital,** and **Don Corleon** to make his sophomore effort a reggae album. Okay, now that we've got the ladies and gentlemen out of the way, here's something for the streets. The wild and crazy boys of **Field Mob** are sparking up their return with assistance from **Jazze Pha, Bobby Valentino, Ciara, Bun B,** and **Bone Crusher.** Well, that's all folks! Hopefully, by the time these tunes hit your pods and players, you'll be over the summer sizzlers and ready to feast on the hefty fall releases.

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Howard Homecoming
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Magic City Classic
October 29th

Florida Classic
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Bayou Classic
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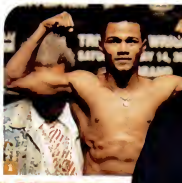
fordroadtrip.com



>20Q

1. From the looks of it, doesn't it seem like **Félix Trinidad** has started using Don King's hairstylist?
2. Speaking of new 'dos (or don'ts), was **Bow Wow** going for the **Kris Kross** look in his video for "Let Me Hold You"?
3. And now that **Bow Wow** has supposedly nabbed **Ciara,** can we assume that **Jermaine Dupri** taught him everything he knows?
4. Why hasn't **Nelly** saved **Ashanti** from The Inc. yet?
5. Isn't it about time rappers stopped saying **"I'm rich, bitch"** in their rhymes?
6. Will **cornrows** ever go out of style?
7. Is **Pretty Ricky** the new **B2K,** but better, because they all can sing and rap?
8. Doesn't **Teairra Marí** look like a life-size **Bratz** doll?
9. What happened to the **Clipse?**
10. If **Bishop Don "Magic" Juan** is such a pimp, why does it seem like he's always wearing the same suit?







11. Is **Gwen Stefani's** "Hollaback Girl" clever or just annoying?
12. Does **Tony Yayo's** impending platinum status prove that the G Unit machine is unstoppable right now?
13. Wasn't it crazy to see **Stevie Wonder** sitting up close at an NBA Finals game?
14. Aren't we praying that **Eminem** just loses the jokey first single and bleach blond hair when he drops his next record?
15. Did anyone really believe **Steve Nash** was more valuable to his team than **Shaq** was to his?
16. Do all of the haters who talked trash about **Mariah Carey** feel stupid now that she's on top of her game?
17. How come **Baltimore** and **Washington, D.C.,** haven't produced any major rappers to speak of (**'Pac** doesn't count)?
18. Is the once more-than-a-lil'-chubby **Timbaland's** new career as a body builder the most bizarre turn of events ever?
19. Aren't we happy for **Common's** success?
20. Does **Mike Jones** wear the same T-shirt every day?

MAIN: MARK SELIGER; TRIMMED: JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES; TIMBALAND: RALPH NOTARO/GETTY IMAGES

BOOK CLUB BOOKS OF THE MONTH



Takeisha, Latrell, and Danita are three best friends who spend their teenage years in the streets of Baltimore City chasing the fast life that's filled with hustlas, money, expensive cars, and pure uncut drama.They see the rap game as their only way out the hood and form a gangsta rap group called The KS (Killin'em Softly) Crew. What they find on their way up the charts is that CASH RULES, and there is never enough of it.



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> THE DETAILS

COVER STORY: "GASSED UP"

COVER: Tank, $505, and blazer, both by **Dolce & Gabbana;** jeans, $332, by **Prps;** and brown braided leather and silver necklace, $450, by **Nagual,** all at Traffic, L.A. (310-659-4313).
PAGE 184: Straw fedora, $275, by **Makins Hats,** and shirt, $102, by **Grail,** both at Traffic, L.A. (310-659-4313).
PAGE 186: Track jacket, $75, by **Puma** (*puma.com*).
PAGE 188: Striped suit, $2,035, by **Oswald Boateng;** Watts T-shirt, $45, by **Evan York;** black leather and silver necklace, $375, by **Nagual;** sneakers, $350, by **Y-3,** all at Traffic, L.A. (310-659-4313).

FASHION: "BARRIO BOOGIE"

PAGE 34: Dress, $4,010, by **Paco Rabanne** by **Patrick Robinson,** at Neiman Marcus, L.A. (310-550-5900); bangles, $65, by **Lee Angel** (*leeangel.com*); patent leather heels, $412, by **Versace** (888-3VERSACE). Striped suit, $1,350, by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren** (888-475-7674); shirt, $182, by **Versace Collection** (888-3-VERSACE); pocket square, $100, by **Hermès** (*hermes.com*); dress shoes, $435, by **Versace Collection;** sunglasses, $210, by **Marc Jacobs** (*marcjacobs.com*). Dress, $1,392, by **Veronique Leroy** (*sevennewyork.com*); bangles, $65, by **Lee Angel;** sandals, $98, by **Michael Kors,** at Macy's (*macys.com*).

PAGE 212: Suit, $1,205, and shirt, $465, both by **Versace Collection** (888-3-VERSACE); fedora, $280, by **Dior Homme** by **Hedi Slimane** (*dior.com*); tie, $110, by **Michael Kors,** N.Y.C. (212-452-4685); pocket scarf, $100, by **Hermès** (*hermes.com*).

PAGES 214–215: Tweed jacket, $80, button-down shirt, $65, and pants, all by **Phat Farm** (*phatfarm.com*); plaid cap, $165, by **Philip Treacy** (*philiptreacy.co.uk*); ring by **Marisa Perry** (*marisaperry.com*). Leather jacket, $1,864, by **Martin Margiela Line '14'** (*aloharag.com*); button-down shirt, $450, and tie, $140, both by **Prada** (888-977-1900); corduroy pants, $280, by **Agnès B** (*agnesb.net*); tweed cap, $146, by **Philip Treacy;** striped belt, $15, by **American Eagle Outfitters** (*ae.com*); ring by **Marisa Perry.**

PAGE 216: Short-sleeve dress, $1,538, by **Louis Vuitton** (866-VUITTON); chain with diamond pendant, $85, and gold link chain, $32, both by **Agatha Paris** (800- AGATHA-7); gold hoops, $5, by **GirlProps** (*girlprops.com*); platform shoes, $445, by **Prada** (888-977-1900).

PAGE 217: Velvet blazer, $1,700, by **Gucci** (*gucci.com*); print button-down shirt, $332, by **Sébastien Meunier,** Paris (011-33-1-4026-4781); sunglasses, $210, by **YSL** (*ysl.com*).

PAGE 218: Houndstooth sweater, $330, by **Moschino,** at Chloe Lane, Park City, Utah (435-645-9888); vest, $526, by **Kris Van Assche** (*krisvanassche.com*); trousers, $360, by **Nell Barrett,** at Louis Boston, Boston (617-262-6100); dress shoes, $440, by **Louis Vuitton** (866-VUITTON). Pinstriped suit, $2,750, button-down shirt, $260, and round-toe oxfords, $580, all by **Jil Sander** (800-704-7317).

PAGE 219: Suit, $21,355, by **Dior Homme** by **Hedi Slimane** (*dior.com*); striped dress shirt, $380, and bow tie, price upon request, both by **Givenchy,** N.Y.C. (212-688-4338); gold rings by **Marisa Perry** (*marisaperry.com*).

PAGE 220: Striped cardigan with logo, $198, by **Marc** by **Marc Jacobs** (*marcjacobs.com*); scarf, $530, by **Marc Jacobs** (*marcjacobs.com*); polo shirt, $49, by **G Unit** (*g-unitclothing.com*); corduroy slacks, $85, by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren** (888-475-7674); patterned cashmere cap, $125, by **EK** by **New Era** (*ekbynewera.com*); sneakers, $45, by **Converse** (*converse.com*). Sweater, $495, by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren** (888-475-7674); print shirt, $800, by **Hussein Chalayan,** at Bloomingdale's, N.Y.C. (212-729-5900); black slacks, $395, by **Miu Miu** (888-977-1900); hat, $22, by **Arnold Hatter** (*a.hat.com*); loafers, $575, by **Prada** (888-977-1900).
PAGE 221: Jacket, $750, by **Salvatore Ferragamo** (800-628-8916); print button-down shirt, $385, by **Moschino Uomo,** at Chloe Lane, Park City, Utah (435-645-9888); corduroy pants, $385, by **Paul Smith,** N.Y.C. (212-627-9770); suede wallabees, $90, by **Clarks** (*clarksusa.com*). Pinstriped suit, $2,750, and button-down shirt, $260, all by **Jil Sander;** sunglasses, $195, by **Gucci** (*solsticestores.com*). Corduroy jacket, $364, by **A.P.C.** (*apc.fr*); button-down wool shirt, $449, by **Ennio Capasa** for **Costume National Homme,** N.Y.C. (212-431-1530); plaid vest, $580, by **Paul Smith,** N.Y.C. (212-627-9770); jeans, $205, by **Just Cavaill,** Bal Harbour, Fla. (305-861-5151); suede loafers, $120, by **Clarks.**

PAGE 222: Tweed top with multicolor buttons, $1,070, by **Moschino,** at Saks Fifth Avenue (877-551-SAKS); metallic knit sweater, $69, by **Bebe** (877-232-3777); skirt, $1,500, by **Matthew Williamson,** at Marshall Field's, Chicago (312-781-1000); necklace, $1,495, by **Aaron Faber,** N.Y.C. (212-586-8411); criss-cross flat shoes, $275, by **Delman** (800-233-6462). Brocade blazer, $995, by **D&G,** at Bloomingdale's, N.Y.C. (212-729-5900); ruffled shirt, $298, by **John Varvatos** (*johnvarvatos.com*); houndstooth wide-leg pants, $245, by **Michael Kors,** at Bergdorf Goodman (*bergdorfgoodman.com*); loafer with tassels, $630, by **a. testoni,** N.Y.C. (212-223-0909).

PAGE 223: Button-down shirt, $190, by **Miu Miu;** V-neck sweater vest, $345, by **Dior Homme** by **Hedi Slimane** (*dior.com*).

PAGE 224: Blazer, $1,200, by **Dsquared²,** at Saks Fifth Avenue (877-551-SAKS); striped dress shirt, $145, by **Polo** by **Ralph Lauren** (888-475-7674); wool pants, $205, by **A.P.C.** (*apc.fr*); velvet loafers, $495, by **Sergio Rossi** (*sergiorossi.com*); silver, diamond, and sapphire ring, $10,500, by **Aaron Faber** (212-586-8411).

PAGE 225: Shirt, $265, and tie, $150, both by **Dries Van Noten,** at Barney's New York, N.Y.C. (212-826-8900); sweater, $228, by **Marc Jacobs** (*marcjacobs.com*); wool jacket, $1,750, by **Givenchy,** N.Y.C. (212-688-4338); pants, $700, by **Jil Sander** (800-704-7317). Dress with ruffle skirt, $2,900, by **Marc Jacobs;** suede shoes, $575, by **Jean Michel Cazabat** (*zappos.com*. Sequin dress, $4,235, by **Prada** (888-977-1900); two-tone sweater, $1,250, by **Dolce & Gabbana** (877-70-DGU5A); gold hoops, $55; by **R.J. Graziano** (212-685-1248); gold necklaces, $29, by **Agatha Paris** (800-AGATHA-7); bangles, $65, by **Lee Angel** (*leeangel.com*); leather shoes with tassels, $140, by **daniblack,** at Herman's Shoe Fashions, Long Beach, Calif. (562-438-3514).

PAGES 226–227: White tuxedo jacket, $2,250, and button-down shirt, $275, both by **Dolce & Gabbana** (877-70-DGU5A). Knit sweater, $925, by **Dolce & Gabbana.** Suit jacket, $1,060, and pants, $345, both by **Just Cavalli,** Bal Harbour, Fla. (305-861-5151); shirt, $325, by **Spencer Hart,** at Bergdorf Goodman (*bergdorfgoodman.com*); pocket square, $100, by **Hermès** (*hermes.com*); hat with ribbon detail, $131, by **Borsalino** (888-847-4287).

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19015 Trillville - Some Cut
19004 Fat Joe - (Safe 2 Say) Da Incredible
19011 Snoop - Drop It Like It's Hot (Remix)
19013 The Game - Hate It Or Love It
19003 Ciara - Oh
19010 Nelly - N Day Say
19016 Ying Yang Twins - Wait
19012 Snoop Doggy Dogg - Signs
19007 Missy Elliot - Lose Control
19014 Tony Yayo - So Seductive
19002 Busta Rhymes - I'll Hurt You
19009 Nelly - Errtime
19006 Luniz - I Got Five On It
19005 Lil Jon - Lovers & Friends

Song Tones

19018 Cypress Hill - Insane In The Brain
19025 Naughty By Nature - Hip Hop Hooray
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19021 Jay-Z - 99 Problems
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19026 Outkast - The Way You Move
19030 Usher - Yeah
19024 Marvin Gaye - Sexual Healing
19017 Al Green - Let's Stay Together
19069 TV Theme - Fat Albert
19023 Lloyd Banks - Karma
19028 T.I. - Bring Em Out
19029 Trick Daddy - Sugar (Gimme Some)
19020 Ja Rule - New York
19019 Daddy Yankee - Gasolina

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Voice Tones

19034 Jenna - Mmm.. I Love it ...
19035 Jenna - Ring Count
19036 Jenn - Who's More Important?
19041 Keisha - Your boy's callin'... again!
19040 Keisha - Playa, pick up the phone!
19038 Keisha - Get The Phone, Baby
19039 Keisha - Pick up the damn phone!
19037 Keisha - Drama On The Line
19031 Don Juan - It's Your Loverman, Baby!
19032 Don Juan - Pimpilicious
19033 Don Juan - Pimps Up, Ho's Down
19042 Too Short - Answer The Phone, Girl
19043 Too Short - Answer Your Pheazy
19044 Too Short - Bitch, I'm Rich
19045 Too Short - Telephone, Pimpin'

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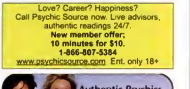








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Timberlands

Timbs have always been hard to the core, regardless of who's wearing them.

"I go to Bay Plaza and catch a flick / Wore my Timberland boots so I can stomp ticks."
—"Sometimes I Rhyme Slow," Nice & Smooth

It's hip hop night at the club, and after 42 minutes on line, you finally approach the velvet rope. One of the linebackers working security optically molests you, and then barks, "No Timbs! Keep it moving!" You stomp off in your six-inch constructions concluding that any "hip hop" party that excludes Timbos is fakin' the funk anyway. After all, Timberland is *the* boot, and the behemoth knew it well enough to bar them by name.

Timberland founder Nathan Swartz purchased complete interest in the Abington Shoe Company in 1955, but the story really begins a decade later. In 1965, Swartz and his sons introduced injection molding technology—which sealed out water by fusing soles to leather uppers rather than stitching them together—to footwear. In 1973, they began manufacturing the "Timberland," one of the first guaranteed waterproof leather boots. The stout footwear proved so popular that the company was officially renamed the Timberland Company in 1978. They expanded their lines in the late '70s and '80s—think boat shoes on pink-polo-clad preppies—but the rugged outdoors aesthetic never changed.

Though not quite the mucky wilderness trails they were designed for, the city streets proved a perfect pathway for Timberlands nonetheless. The tree-stamped shit-kickers stood up beautifully to urban elements like concrete, barbed wire, and broken glass. By the early '90s, hip hop artists like Treach and Redman, and even R&B crooners like Jodeci, were bringing Timbs to the forefront of urban fashion—particularly on the East Coast. Soon, everyone from thugs to step teams were stalking, walking in their six-inch construction boots. In the mid-'90s, Brooklyn's military-minded Boot Camp Clik helped popularize the company's field boots and chukkas, matching them with fatigues.

More than a decade after they exploded on to the fickle urban market, the durable boots remain an oft-referenced staple in hip hop and R&B. Initially hesitant to embrace consumers who placed fashion before function (look ma, no laces), Timberland has reached out to the youth and urban communities with global service events like their Community Builders tour, Serv-a-palooza, and events on Earth Day, as well as colorful choices like pink or baby blue boots. Whichever ones you rock, if a bouncer ever fronts, just don't knock him down. That's the way you get Timberland'd up.

Justin Monroe

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